OPENING ONESELF TO AN OTHER:
SARTRE'S AND LEVINAS' PHENOMENOLOGICAL ETHICS

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Abstract

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In this dissertation, I raise the question as to what sort of ethics might be gotten out of phenomenology, and begin to answer it by examining the ethical theories of Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas. I begin the project by circumscribing the sense in which I take it that both Sartre and Levinas are working within the phenomenological tradition, and by outlining the fundamental assumptions -- phenomenological and ontological -- about the self and its position in the world upon which Sartre's and Levinas' ethics are based. I then proceed to discuss these philosophers' accounts of relations with others, and discuss in detail the ethical theory that Sartre and Levinas develop on the basis of their respective descriptions of self and others.

Finally, in the last chapter of the dissertation, I conclude that, in the case of Sartre and Levinas, the sort of ethics that phenomenology offers is: (1) a metaethical account rather than a first-order normative ethics, which proposes (2) that in order to be genuinely free, my choices must be determined through my relations with other persons and (3) that ethics is a matter of self-construction, in the sense that ethical normativity is constituted
in relationship with others along with the construction of the free and conscious self
(Chapter 5).
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .............................................................................................................. iv

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1: Sartre's and Levinas' Phenomenological Ontology I: Fundamental Accounts of
the Self ................................................................................................................................. 15
  1.1 Sartre on the self ....................................................................................................... 16
    1.1.1 Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself .................................................................. 16
    1.1.2 Reflection, negation, anguish and bad faith .................................................... 26
  1.2 Levinas on the self .................................................................................................... 36
    1.2.1 The il y a and the hypostasis of the self ......................................................... 36
    1.2.2 Sensation and representation: pre-objectifying and objectifying
        intentionality ........................................................................................................... 45
  1.3 On "ontology" and "metaphysics" ........................................................................... 54
  1.4 A few remarks on phenomenological ontology ...................................................... 63

Chapter 2: Sartre's and Levinas' Phenomenological Ontology II: The Encounter with the
Other .................................................................................................................................... 75
  2.1 Sartre on the Other ................................................................................................... 76
    2.1.1 The look, being-for-others, and the internal negation ..................................... 76
    2.1.2 Concrete relations and the possibility of conversion ........................................ 89
  2.2 Levinas on the Other ............................................................................................... 104
    2.2.1 The face, language, passivity, and hypostasis as substitution ......................... 104
    2.2.2 Concrete relations ............................................................................................. 122
  2.3 The priority of the Other in Sartre and Levinas ....................................................... 127

Chapter 3: Sartre's ethics: Creation, Authenticity, and Situated Freedom .................. 133
  3.1 The "Ethical Implications" of Sartre's ontology: man as an ens causa sui ............ 134
  3.2 The ens causa sui revisited: freedom and conversion in the Notebooks for an
      Ethics ......................................................................................................................... 147
  3.3 History, concrete ethics, and the Other .................................................................... 161

Chapter 4: Levinas' ethics: From the face to ethics ..................................................... 176
  4.1 Responsibility, the face, and ur-ethics .................................................................... 179
  4.2 A pre-linguistic command ...................................................................................... 188
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 The saying of responsibility</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Murder and violence</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Freedom</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Phenomenological Metaethics as a Humanism of the Other
5.1 Phenomenological ethics as phenomenological metaethics
5.1.1 Sartre
5.1.2 Levinas
5.2 The Social character of ethical freedom
5.3 Sociality, ethical self-construction, and phenomenology

Bibliography
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I would also like to thank Dr. Kathryn Gardner, whose friendship, support, and hours spent watching my son made this work possible. Finally, thank you to my husband, Drew, who doesn't like Sartre or Levinas very much, but who has discussed them with me at length anyway.
"Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality", writes Emmanuel Levinas at the beginning of his Preface to *Totality and Infinity*. Our ordinary experience of human relations, he admits, might seem to provide evidence that we are indeed duped by morality: herein, what we experience is "the permanent possibility of war", while the "art of foreseeing war and of winning it by every means -- politics" is "opposed to morality, as philosophy to naïveté" (*TI* 21). Politics, it seems, dictates a successful man's actions, while morality is a fool's game. The state of "war", as Levinas describes it, includes not only physical violence inflicted by persons on one another, but also the subjugation of persons to a system, a "totality" or "order" that reduces individuals "to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves" (*Ibid.*). In war, individuals and their personal dignity are subordinated to a power play through which tyrants in control treat lesser men as pawns, while these tyrants themselves are controlled by the demands of political calculation. To answer the question of whether morality is myth or reality, we will need to consider whether this state of war is or can ever be suspended: "The moral consciousness can sustain the mocking gaze of the political man only if the certitude of peace dominates the evidence of war" (22). Is there an experience of this peace, or a way for us to see the limits of the 'totality' enforced by war?
Levinas' answer, of course, is well-known. In a relationship with an Other who is "a surplus exterior to the totality" we discover evidence that the totality of war does find a limit: namely, the transcendence of the Other over and above that totality (Ibid. 22).

Levinas argues that "ethics is an optics" that allows us to "see" this transcendence, which reveals itself with an entirely unique phenomenality, and which, he goes on to claim, is the foundation of subjectivity itself (22, 26, 29). This optics, this vision, which Levinas argues is already present within the self, proves that we are not duped by morality. It will be a goal of this dissertation to elucidate the meaning of these claims by explaining the ethical theory that Levinas proposes in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*.

It is, furthermore, the purpose of this dissertation to consider the fact that Levinas' ethical theory is a phenomenological one, and to question whether this methodological approach has any distinctive effect on the type of ethics he proposes. Hence it will not be incidental to my study that Levinas describes the transcendence of the Other using the framework and vocabulary of phenomenology. Thus he claims that "Husserlian phenomenology has made possible" a "passage from ethics to metaphysical exteriority": namely, the demonstration that the relation with the Other ("ethics") involves a unique intention that overflows objectifying thought ("metaphysical exteriority"), which overflowing constitutes a challenge or a "hither side" to totality and to war (TI 29). To be sure, Levinas appropriates phenomenology critically and creatively, as, for example, when he asserts that what is essential to his theory is "the idea of the overflowing of objectifying thought by a forgotten experience", that is, the *transcendent intention* of ethics that he asserts need not be characterized by "the noesis-noema structure" (Ibid.). My main interest is not to explain Levinas' appropriation of Husserl nor to puzzle out the
finer details of Levinas' phenomenological lineage, much less to defend *per se* the legitimacy of Levinas' status as a phenomenologist. Rather, the issue that motivates this study is to raise the question as to what sort of ethics can be developed beginning from phenomenology. Levinas' theory is, if you will, a case-study in this investigation.

Levinas' theory is not the only case-study that I consider in the pages that follow; as the reader will discover, the work of Jean-Paul Sartre is equally central to my inquiry into what phenomenology has to offer ethical theory. The choice of Sartre could perhaps be justified simply because of the powerful influence his thoughts on freedom and human action had on twentieth century philosophy, both in France and beyond. My considered decision to examine his work for the purposes of this study, however, was based on the ideas he sketches in his unpublished, and ultimately less influential, *Notebooks for an Ethics*. In those notes, one finds a moral theory according to which ethics is situated at the heart of subjectivity, such that to be a good person involves a change in the self's way of being -- or, to put it more precisely, ethics is a realization of the possibilities latent in the ontology of the free person as Sartre describes it in *Being and Nothingness*. Putting *Being and Nothingness* and the *Notebooks* into dialogue, I thus found an idea that complements, without precisely mirroring, Levinas' idea that a primordial ethical experience occurs within free subjectivity and grounds selfhood. Might Sartre's and Levinas' common focus on the structure of the self as a means to explain ethics, and on the difference between a pre-ethical self and a self that undergoes an experience by means of which it is recreated as ethical, stem from their phenomenology? It would be at least plausible that this focus on an ethical structure of subjectivity is distinctively phenomenological, if only because that method is one that aims to account for objectivity
and meaning by looking at the ways in which these are constituted within a subject's conscious experience. In order to confirm or deny this suspicion, I will be interested in both Sartre and Levinas qua phenomenologists and qua ethicists, and with the relationship between these.

In addition to Sartre's proposal that ethics marks a change in the self's way of being, another parallel with Levinas will also be significant for my project: namely, Sartre's focus in *Notebooks for an Ethics* on the important role played by other persons in bringing about the shift in the self that inaugurates ethics, which he calls the "conversion" to ethics. The idea here is that other persons are essential to ethical conversion and the good life, and that they are so because they bring about a change in the self; while Sartrean others cannot be easily assimilated to the Levinasian Other, this key idea is comparable to Levinas' proposal that the relation with an Other is the foundation of ethics and ethical subjectivity. Sartre's focus on the possibility and significance of positive relations with others in the *Notebooks* is, at first blush, surprising given his bleak account of concrete relations in the third part of *Being and Nothingness*. Yet Sartre helps resolve the tension by suggesting that *Being and Nothingness* is an ontology before conversion while the *Notebooks* are an ontology after conversion (*NE* 6). This suggests that Sartre, like Levinas, holds that ethics can meet the implicit skeptical challenge posed by our experience of human conflict; despite an initial experience of "war", positive relations with others are possible, and indeed necessary for the fulfillment of human existence. By explaining how fruitful relation with others, or the seeds thereof, are planted within the very structure of authentic subjectivity itself, Sartre suggests that conflict between free persons is not the full and final truth of human relations.
Before proceeding with my discussion of Sartre's and Levinas' ethical theories and the phenomenological accounts of the self upon which those theories are based, I would like to admit explicitly that there are other phenomenologists whose theories would prove helpful in answering my motivating question -- namely, what has phenomenology to offer to ethics? Nevertheless, preferring depth to breadth I have confined the present study to Sartre and Levinas, and have found much of interest in this limited sample of phenomenologists who propose an ethics. As it is, this dissertation does not even aim to be an exhaustive study or analysis of Sartre's or Levinas' ethical theory, in isolation or in comparison with one another. To be sure, careful textual exegesis does take up a great number of the following pages, as it does in most works of philosophy that take their inspiration from the history of the discipline. But the questions that motivate this inquiry are not primarily exegetical ones but rather questions about the links between phenomenology and ethics, interpersonal relationships, and the good life for man. So, while I may hope elsewhere to consider what contributions other phenomenologists have to offer to ethics, here I claim success by the mere fact that I have discovered in my two figures a few distinctive and fruitful insights into what ethics is and what it means to lead an ethical life.

While I cannot presume to say whether most philosophers working in ethics today have ever bothered to ask themselves the question of what sort of ethics might be gotten out of phenomenology, I can say that they certainly should ask themselves this question. After all, to explain the ways in which we know and behave according to objective values has long been a goal of ethics; what ethicist would not therefore be intrigued by a method that promises to give an explanation of how such values are constituted within conscious
experience? (This method is all the more intriguing since it promises to explain how
normative values are values for us while insisting that what is constituted in conscious
experience is, in a pertinent sense, real or objective.) Phenomenology promises such an
explanation with its rigorous analysis of the modes in which diverse sorts of objects are
given to intuition and comprise the meaningful world of everyday life.

Those interested in virtue ethics have particular reason to be interested in a
phenomenological ethics such as Sartre and Levinas propose, since these
phenomenologists share with virtue ethics a distinctive claim -- namely, that the
constitution of the self is the site of ethical obligation. For the virtue ethicist, good is
fundamentally a trait that describes moral agents in community with others, while
worldly objects, situations, and obligations have a moral value relative to virtue and the
development of those agents. Meanwhile, in Husserlian phenomenology the very being of
values and obligations is the mode in which they are intended by agents. Sartre and
Levinas go further to explore the way that the self becomes a responsible moral agent
even as the meaning of values and obligations are constituted through interpersonal
experience. Certainly there remain many differences between the accounts of the moral
agent offered by these phenomenologists and those proposed by virtue theorists. The
interesting fact remains, however, that both take the agent to be the site of moral value,
rejecting deontic and consequentialist appeals to an independent rule or a calculus of the
situation as the primary benchmark of the good.

Any good Kantian ethicist should find that reason compels him too to be
interested in phenomenology, with its now-rare confidence in the accessibility of a priori
truths about the manner in which lived experience is constituted. Although the
phenomenological imperative to reach essential structures through a careful description of lived experience may result in a different sort of ethics from that of Kant, the "Kantian" link between ethical normativity and rationality is one that might be expected also to inspire the phenomenologist, for whom normativity in general is part of the structure of meaning that constitutes the world as intelligible.

Perhaps those who do not find themselves drawn to the possibility of a phenomenological ethics on purely philosophical grounds will nevertheless find themselves tempted by the allure of the forbidden -- for, it should be admitted, Husserl himself neglected to extend the phenomenological method to questions of ethics while Heidegger aimed to replace ethics with the thinking of being. Furthermore, this resistance to ethics may appear to be endemic to phenomenology, since, I would suggest, it stems from the fact that a phenomenologist begins his philosophizing by bracketing all ontological assumptions regarding objects transcendent to consciousness. It would lead me too far afield to defend this claim with the care it deserves, but I will offer a few thoughts as to how this bracketing might be problematic for ethics. For one example, consider the plausible suggestion that Husserl's emphatic division between discussion of transcendent metaphysical realities and pure phenomenology -- i.e., the description of conscious experience and reality's essential structures enabled by the transcendental and eidetic reductions -- was what led him to such a thin, a-moral account of the Other. After all, if the epoché leads to the result that no analysis of the Other is available beyond the profiles by which he appears in the world, it is difficult to see how one could give any account of truly intersubjective experience, ethical or otherwise.
Another way of grasping this tension between ethics and the phenomenologist's starting point is to notice that traditional ethical theories are usually grounded on metaphysical assumptions about the nature and experience of the Other in the form of claims about the nature of man and society. For example, the Aristotelian ethicist bases his account on an analysis of human nature that yields certain premises about the good for man, from which are then derived particular virtues and an account of the just mean by which this good is to be attained. Meanwhile, the Kantian suggests an account of human nature as possessed of a self-legislating rational will, and claims that ethics is not a matter of achieving a certain end but of acting in accord with that nature. For a phenomenologist, however, no route of this sort is available, since ostensibly no metaphysical claims about human nature are available as starting points; rather, the essence of man itself must be investigated as it appears and structures intentional experience. It is worth noting that Heidegger's relative comfort with ontological questions does not mitigate the tension between phenomenology and the transcendent analyses of self and other upon which ethical accounts are often grounded. Even if we read *Da-sein* as a description of universal human nature, the result would not be an account of man's essence from which ethical norms could be derived but rather an account of man's relationship to Being as such -- an account that Heidegger rightly claims is neither ethics nor traditional ontology but rather "fundamental ontology" ("Letter on Humanism" 258). Nor does the ontological category *mit-Sein* serve as a foundation for norms governing intersubjective experience. What Heidegger offers is not an account of interpersonal relations, but rather an analysis of a mode in which *Da-sein* is, or asks the question of
Being -- namely, in company with others.¹ Thus Heidegger's fundamental ontology no more resolves the apparent tension between pure phenomenology and the metaphysical assumptions that traditionally get ethics off the ground than does Husserl's idealistic account of the Other in his fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*.

These difficulties notwithstanding, the ethical theories of Sartre and Levinas stand as a challenge to the apparent tension between phenomenology and ethics. Here we find two very different philosophers who attempted to develop an ethics beginning from phenomenology, and whose work, as I will show, does exhibit certain distinctive commonalities that may be thought to stem from their phenomenological approach. In this dissertation, I maintain with them that phenomenological ethics is in fact possible despite Husserl and Heidegger's resistance and argue that phenomenological ethics does have distinctive contributions to make. Their contributions are, I maintain, metaethical ones, since as we will see both Sartre and Levinas focus on the structure and origin of ethics and make claims about first-order obligations only to the extent that the general structure of ethics determines those obligations. This claim, will, no doubt, irritate some philosophers -- those, for example, who want to defend the relevance of Levinas'

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¹ Indeed, both Sartre and Levinas criticize Heideggerian *mit-Sein* as an account of intersubjectivity that never actually reaches the Other. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre condemns Heidegger for transforming the original relation between "the you and me" into "the we", and claims that "the relation of the *mit-Sein* can be of absolutely no use to us in resolving the psychological, concrete problem of the recognition of the Other" (332, 334). Instead, Sartre bases his own descriptions of our concrete relations with Others on his ontological category being-for-others. Meanwhile, he adopts and transforms Heidegger's "authenticity", using it to denote the possibility of an individual appropriately embracing the fact of his radical freedom, and thereby endowing it with ethical connotations that Heidegger rejected (Cf. "Letter on Humanism" 236).

Levinas, for his part, criticizes the Heideggerian attempt to prioritize the thought of Being as an attempt to cover over the fundamental encounter between the self and the Other. For him, the account of *mit-Sein* is just one more way in which Heidegger mistakenly replaces ethics with an account of the ecstatic relation between man and Being. As we will see, Levinas insists by contrast that the basic ethical relation is what pulls the individual out of himself into an experience of Being.
philosophy by insisting that his works point towards a determinate first-order theory.\(^2\)

Nevertheless my conclusion that phenomenological ethics, as exemplified in Sartre and Levinas, is a metaethics is no strike against the significance of their contributions. Admittedly, this conclusion suggests that phenomenology simply may not lend itself to the construction or defense of a particular first-order ethical theory, but this is not a thesis that I discuss or defend here nor do I think that this limited study of Sartre and Levinas would be sufficient to make such a case.

Instead, I have drawn positive conclusions from Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenological metaethics, arguing that their philosophy can make a contribution to the way we think about what ethics is and, more particularly, what sort of interpersonal relations characterize an ethical life. As I will argue in the later chapters of this dissertation, their phenomenological approach leads Sartre and Levinas to focus on the ways in which ethical normativity is to be found within freedom; that is, they propose that once we see and acknowledge what true freedom really is, we will find that freedom is not the power to choose arbitrarily between alternative courses of action but rather the power to choose the good as it is determined in and through interpersonal relationships.

As we will see in the final chapter, both Sartre and Levinas propose that the ethical life is characterized by a certain sociality -- that is, that the ethical life is one in which we allow our choices to be determined according to values or goods that are constituted as such by our relations with other persons. A second distinctive contribution of Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenological ethics, which I have already intimated above, is their

\(^2\) Cf., e.g., Joshua James Shaw, *Emmanuel Levinas on the Priority of Ethics: Putting Ethics First* (Cambria Press, 2008).
proposal that becoming ethical is a change in the structure of the self, or as I also like to put it, ethics is a matter of self-construction. It is in order to exhibit this point that I focus in the early chapters on the way in which Sartre and Levinas describe, first, the structure of the self without taking into account relations with others and, second, the way in which that structure is affected by relations with others. In the end I conclude that we might think of Sartre and Levinas as providing us with a new, phenomenological humanism, a "humanism of the Other" as Levinas put it, according to which the dignity of the human self is re-imagined not on the basis of an absolute a priori nature of the human but rather on the basis of the way in which free human persons discover their meaning or purpose by opening themselves to other persons.

In summary, a brief outline of the five chapters that comprise this dissertation is as follows: I begin the project by circumscribing the sense in which I take it that both Sartre and Levinas are working within the phenomenological tradition, and by outlining the fundamental assumptions -- phenomenological and ontological -- about the self and its position in the world upon which Sartre's and Levinas' ethics are based (Chapter 1). I then proceed to discuss these philosophers' accounts of relations with others (Chapter 2), and discuss in detail the ethical theory that Sartre and Levinas develop on the basis of their respective descriptions of self and others (Chapters 3 and 4). Finally, in the last chapter of the dissertation, I conclude that, in the case of Sartre and Levinas, the sort of ethics that phenomenology offers is: (1) a metaethical account rather than a first-order normative ethics, which proposes (2) that in order to be genuinely free, my choices must be determined through my relations with other persons and (3) that ethics is a matter of
self-construction, in the sense that ethical normativity is constituted in relationship with others along with the construction of the free and conscious self (Chapter 5).

Finally, I would like to make a few remarks concerning the primary texts on which I focus in this dissertation. In the case of Sartre, I have focused on Being and Nothingness and the posthumously published Notebooks for an Ethics, and my reading of these has been influenced by Existentialism as a Humanism and some of Sartre's literary works. I do not discuss Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason or other material later than Saint Genet. As I have already suggested, this is because my project is to determine what sort of ethics Sartre derives starting from phenomenology, and I follow common consensus in holding that the distinct, Marxist ontology of the person that Sartre develops in his later work is simply not based on the phenomenological ontology of his earlier work. I intend to make no lengthy defense of my extensive reliance on Sartre's Notebooks for an Ethics, which, to certain purists, may seem illegitimate given their incomplete, fragmentary character and their posthumous publication. I can only say that I have used this work because I find it both fascinating and relevant: it contains Sartre's extensive comments on key ethical concepts such as value and freedom, and it explores an important possibility only briefly alluded to in Being and Nothingness -- namely, the possibility of conversion and an alternate encounter with others following after conflict.

In the case of Levinas, I have focused on Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being since these are his most comprehensive ethical texts. Earlier texts, especially Time and the Other and Existence and Existents, have been helpful in developing Levinas'  

3 Cf., e.g., Thomas Anderson, Sartre's Two Ethics 87-89; Stéphanie Habib, La responsabilité chez Sartre et Levinas, 18-19.
account of the "hypostasis" of the self. Furthermore, my reading of his early book on Husserl, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, has heavily informed my interpretation of his approach to phenomenological method. In this book, published decades prior to *Totality* and *Otherwise*, Levinas is already wary of the limitations of Husserl and Heidegger's approach to intersubjectivity and ethical meaning, but he has not yet rejected the idea that phenomenology is a route to ontology. The essays "Freedom and Command" and "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" have also been influential in my discussion of Levinas' accounts of freedom and responsibility. I do not comment on Levinas' Talmudic writings, which are more properly theological than philosophical. Although Levinas does discuss ethics in them, and particularly explores the links between ethics and Judaism, I will follow his own preference not to emphasize the links between his philosophical work and these writings.

Finally I would like to note that various themes in Sartre's and Levinas' ethical theory have been compared by other scholars, albeit in few places. These studies, as well as other literature on Sartre and Levinas, have been of course most helpful in preparing this study, and I offer thanks to all the authors whose names appear in my bibliography. Thus far, however, no one has been particularly interested in Sartre and Levinas *qua*

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4. It is perhaps of interest to note that Levinas' early volume on Husserl was the book by which Sartre was first introduced to phenomenology. It is not difficult to see how Sartre's reading of the text resulted both in his Heideggerian preference for phenomenology as ontology and his interest in the transcendence of consciousness.

phenomenolgical ethicists, nor has anyone drawn the particular parallels that I do in the conclusion of this dissertation. I can sincerely hope that this work, therefore, represents an original contribution to the literature on Sartre and Levinas, and that it will help to draw attention to the possible significance of phenomenology for ethics more broadly.
CHAPTER 1:  
SARTRE'S AND LEVINAS' PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY I:  
FUNDAMENTAL ACCOUNTS OF THE SELF

Before embarking on an inquiry into what I am calling the "phenomenological ethics" of Sartre and Levinas, it is necessary for me both to explain the sense in which I take it that these philosophers are phenomenologists and to discuss certain key parts of their phenomenology, in particular their claims about fundamental human existence. In fact these claims have a double status: they are both phenomenological in that they engage in reflective descriptions of consciousness in order to elucidate the correlation between subjectivity and the lived world, and ontological in that they describe being, the self, and the manifold relations between the two. By illuminating the double status of these accounts, I hope to show that Sartre and Levinas engage in extensions of the phenomenological method that are both legitimate and fruitful, and that their transcendent ontological claims do not threaten their status as phenomenologists. This move is important because it is these ontological claims about fundamental human experience that constitute the background against which Sartre and Levinas develop the accounts of intersubjective experience upon which they base their ethical theory. Thus, in order to show that Sartre and Levinas do represent two possibilities for a phenomenological ethics, I will need to explain in what sense the root of their ethics is phenomenological.
That said, it is not my goal here to explore fully the ways in which Sartre and Levinas adopt and modify phenomenology. Rather, because the central goal of this study is to discover whether there are any distinctive ideas that Sartre's and Levinas' approaches may contribute to ethics, the more important function of this discussion will be to explicate key claims about the self that we will need to understand in order to appreciate their ethical theories. Here I hope to provide the reader with an initial account of the self prior to taking account of the Other. In the next chapter, this discussion will enable me to explain how the encounter with others interrupts that self and opens the possibility of its re-creation as ethical.

1.1 Sartre on the self

1.1.1 Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself

Sartre's account of the self prior to an encounter with the Other rests on his basic distinction between "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself", two types or regions of being that correspond to the being of objects and the being of consciousness. Sartre introduces the distinction near the end of his dense Introduction to Being and Nothingness, defining these modes of being with two terse but effective formulas that he goes on to explain in much greater detail over the course of his book. Being-in-itself, Sartre claims, "is what it is", while being-for-itself "is defined . . . as being what it is not and not being what it is" (BN 28). As we will see, these formulas are ontological, not phenomenological, descriptions; however, Sartre believes the distinction between these two modes of being is presupposed by the phenomenological notion of intentionality.
Being-in-itself is the type of being had by tables, lamps, packages of tobacco, and all the other phenomena of the world; it is the being of that which appears to consciousness, and which is consequently transcendent to consciousness (24). Sartre describes this type of being as "opaque" and "solid", not simply because we apprehend these objects "from without", or as they appear to consciousness, but because they in fact have no "within" that could be distinguished from that "without"; that is, this type of being has no self-reference or capacity for reflexivity (28). Sartre likes to use the term "superfluous" [de trop] to describe being-in-itself, by which he means that "consciousness absolutely can not derive [being-in-itself] from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law" (27, 29). The claim that being-in-itself cannot be derived from any other being suggests that this type of being is a causa sui. Sartre, however, unequivocally rejects this idea, claiming that although being-in-itself is not derived from any other being it is also not self-created. It is, he asserts, "uncreated". Neither passive nor active, being-in-itself does not change or become; hence it simply is what it is, as a fullness of objectivity that exists for consciousness (Ibid.).

Being-for-itself, by contrast, is the type of being had by consciousness. It is distinguished first and foremost from being-in-itself because it is "transparent", which means that it is always directed towards a transcendent object. Affirming with Husserl that "all consciousness . . . is consciousness of something", Sartre goes on to explain,

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1 In the Introduction to Being and Nothingness Sartre provides these examples of things that exist in the mode of being-it-self; perhaps accidentally, they are all artifacts. To be clear, non-artifacts, such as, e.g., trees and stones, also exist in this mode (cf. BN 142). It is likely that Sartre thought most or all non-human animals also exist in the mode of being-in-itself, but there is debate on this point.
This means that there is no consciousness which is not a *positing* of a transcendent object, or if you prefer, that consciousness has no "content" (*BN* 11).

In claiming that consciousness is a positing of a "transcendent" object, what Sartre wants to stress is that consciousness is always directed towards an object exterior to itself and never merely towards a representation, mental object, or other internal dimension of itself.\(^2\) Hence, he writes, consciousness "transcends itself in order to reach an object, and it exhausts itself in this same positing" (*Ibid.*). Later in the Introduction Sartre argues based on this fact that the being of consciousness, being-for-itself, is implicitly dependent on being-in-itself, the being of the worldly objects posited by consciousness.

When Sartre claims that consciousness "exhausts itself" in positing objects, he does not mean that consciousness is never aware of itself and its own activity. To the contrary, Sartre argues that "positional" consciousness of transcendent objects is always accompanied by a "non-positional", or "nonthetic", awareness that he calls the "pre-reflective cogito" (13). This non-positional awareness is consciousness' grasp of its own knowing, a "consciousness of consciousness" (11). Here consciousness does not aim at itself as though it were an object; rather, this awareness is "an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself" (12). On Sartre's picture, both positional consciousness of an object and non-positional self-consciousness are essential elements of being-for-itself.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) See Morris, pp. 65-66 for a brief but helpful summary of the term 'transcendent' in Sartre. Morris distinguishes between (1) a sense of transcendence that is "equivalent to 'transphenomenal'", (2) a use in which it "is contrasted with 'immanent' or 'contained within'", and (3) a sense in which transcendence "is contrasted with 'facticity'" (66, 74n). The meaning of 'transcendent' in the passage quoted here is the second of these.

\(^3\) According to Sartre the pre-reflective cogito also enables consciousness to be reflectively aware of itself in different ways. As I will discuss in later chapters, the capacity of consciousness to engage in reflection is a *sine qua non* of its moral character.
Being and Nothingness, Sartre generally uses parentheses in order to indicate that he is discussing non-positional rather than positional consciousness; for example, in being 'conscious of' a table, we are also 'conscious (of)' our perceiving the table.  

Sartre's comments regarding non-positional consciousness can help to clarify why he claims that the being of consciousness, unlike being-in-itself, lacks self-coincidence and hence "is what it is not and is not what it is". Insofar as this self-awareness is a consciousness (of) consciousness, it implicitly sets up a distance and a relation between a subject and himself: in order for the conscious subject to be aware of this self, it seems, he cannot be absolutely coincident with it; nevertheless, the self that is apprehended in the pre-reflective cogito is not a transcendent object but rather is the selfsame subject who apprehends. As Sartre explains,

In fact the self cannot be apprehended as a real existent; the subject can not be self, for coincidence with self, as we have seen, causes the self to disappear. But neither can it not be itself since the self is an indication of the subject himself. The self therefore represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence (123-4).

Strangely, then, it seems that consciousness both is and is not the self it always pre-reflectively apprehends. In fact, Sartre makes this feature of consciousness its "ontological foundation"; being-for-itself, he explains, is itself only in the form of a "presence to itself" that "always implies duality" (Ibid.). Being-for-itself "is what it is not

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4 The distinction between positional and non-positional consciousness outlined in this chapter may make it seem as though consciousness of transcendent being is always positional consciousness. Note, however, that Sartre does explore the possibility that we experience being-in-itself in a non-positional mode. In the experience he calls nausea, we encounter being-in-itself as the brute weight of existence that sustains worldly objects. In Being and Nothingness, this direct encounter with being-in-itself is described as an ontological dimension of the body, the fleshy materiality of which enables embodied consciousness to encounter pure being-in-itself as the inescapable weight of its own contingency (Cf. 444-445, 450).
and is not what it is" because it is the being of the conscious self and yet is also at a
distance from that self.

Being-for-itself is, on Sartre's account, non-coincident with itself in another sense.
This is because a conscious being acts in the world -- i.e., it "uses means with an end in
view" -- and is thereby capable of altering both objects in the world and the meaning of
its own being (25, 27). Being-in-itself, by contrast, is neither active nor passive, but
simply is (Ibid.). The claim that activity and change are limited to being-for-itself -- i.e.,
the being of consciousness -- may seem to smack of idealism, but Sartre insists that he
rules out idealism by making it clear that consciousness always includes a positional
element, and hence depends on transcendent being (26). Still, however, the full,
unchanging, non-reflexive character of being-in-itself may seem to conflict with Sartre's
claim that being-in-itself is the type of being characteristic of phenomenal objects, or
objects in the world. Phenomena such as tables and packages of tobacco appear in facets;
they change, reveal facets of themselves that were previously hidden "within", and are
'derivable' from other beings insofar as they are related to other phenomena in the world.
How then can Sartre claim that static being-in-itself is the being of phenomena?

This problem can be resolved by observing that Sartre's 'being-in-itself' and
'being-for-itself' are ontological, not phenomenological, designations. The being of
worldly objects, that is, is not the same as those objects themselves, and the
characteristics of that being as such do not necessarily correspond to the ways in which
those objects manifest themselves. Being-in-itself is no particular object; therefore, that
particular objects change and exist in relation to one another is no argument against the
claims that being-in-itself is beyond change and cannot be derived from any other being.
This observation that the being of a thing is not the same as the thing itself should, perhaps, be obvious. Nevertheless, if one is sometimes tempted while reading Sartre to interpret the terms "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself" as though they designated types of objects rather than types of being, it is not without good reason. On Sartre's account, certain objects do always have a particular type of being; worldly objects exist as being-in-itself while consciousness exists as being-for-itself. This does not mean, however, that the characteristics of these ontological structures are the same as the qualities of objects.

That said, it should be noted that Sartre does tend to presume certain links necessarily hold between certain qualities of phenomenal objects and characteristics of being. In the Introduction to *Being and Nothingness*, he reasons from the ways in which objects appear to the structures of being itself. Contrary to Husserl, however, who brackets the existence of objects and looks instead at their essential and accidental properties in order to reach conclusions about the general structures of experience, Sartre reaches conclusions about the general structures of being itself by looking at what he takes to be the existential qualities of objects. Concrete, worldly objects, he observes, have no intrinsic self-reference, whereas conscious beings do; consequently, he argues, there must be at least two different general types of being. It is worth noting that Sartre is hardly alone among the followers of Husserl to hold that the existence and existential qualities of objects are never fully "parenthesised"; that is, here he follows both Heidegger and Levinas\(^5\) and concurs with Merleau-Ponty that when we engage in

\(^5\) Sartre was first introduced to Husserl by means of Levinas' early book on Husserl, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, a text that confers a heavy Heideggerian gloss on Husserl. In this text, Levinas presents Husserl's accounts of intuition and consciousness as stemming from an anti-naturalistic account of being, and claims that Husserl's fundamental contribution was to offer a new conception of being (Cf. Chapters 2 and 3).
philosophical reflection we never fully suspend certain assumptions regarding the existence of objects and their mode of being. What these phenomenologists all suggest in different ways is that intentional analysis, or analysis of the way in which objects appear, reveals not only general truths about conscious experience but also about being itself.

The Introduction to Being and Nothingness may seem to suggest that we have access to being itself in two different ways. This is because Sartre talks about a "phenomenon of being", yet he also claims that being is beyond phenomena, or "transphenomenal" (Cf., e.g., 24-25). Here, just when we begin to assume that he thinks being does reveal itself as some discrete "phenomenon of being", we are told that it is in fact beyond phenomenality. In fact the two claims are not contradictory. The so-called "phenomenon" of being is, according to Sartre, revealed only in and through the being of existents as consciousness apprehends them. It is not, therefore, some independently revealed object with its own profiles and properties. Although existents never fully reveal their being to consciousness, claims Sartre, they do reveal the "meaning" of their being, and it is this meaning that constitutes the "phenomenon of being":

The meaning of the being of the existent in so far as it reveals itself to consciousness is the phenomenon of being. (25)

To be clear, to say that the phenomenon of being is revealed as the meaning of the being of the existent is not to say that it is the meaning of the existent. The meaning of the existent, Sartre explains, would be the essence of the object, or "the principle of the series of appearances which disclose it" (8). Noting that the essence of an object is not the same as its existence, Sartre claims that being is revealed only as "the condition of all revelation" (Ibid.). Being is not "hidden behind phenomena", as though it were a
noumenal object, but rather is the foundation of the phenomena that appear (9, Cf. 24). However, because it "is not subject to the phenomenal condition -- which is to exist only in so far as it reveals itself", being is in this sense beyond the phenomena -- or, as Sartre has it, "transphenomenal" (9). With an explicit nod to Heidegger, Sartre sums up his position by affirming that we have a "pre-ontological comprehension of it; that is, one which is not accompanied by a fixing in concepts and elucidation" (25). It is because being manifests itself in this way, through an immediate disclosure, that Sartre refers to it as a "primary phenomenon" (Ibid.). It is easy to see, however, that being has no distinct phenomenality, or mode of appearing. The phenomenon of being is not some particular appearance nor is the 'transphenomenality' of being the designation of some special phenomenality. Being is manifest without appearing, as the condition of all phenomena.

The transphenomenality of being is important in part because it suggests that being-in-itself and being-for-itself, two regions of being, are also transphenomenal. Thus, in claiming that the being of objects is being-in-itself and that the being of consciousness is being-for-itself, Sartre does not maintain that being-in-itself and being-for-itself appear as the essences or qualities of, respectively, objects or consciousness. Rather, Sartre holds that the mode in which objects and consciousness exist is different. Our awareness of these two modes of being is part-and-parcel of our pre-ontological comprehension of being; they are structures, as it were, of that condition of revelation that we intuit in our worldly experience. The important point here is that being-in-itself and being-for-itself are not modes of appearing but rather modes of the condition of appearing; they are not types of phenomenality but regions of being. According to Sartre, objects are being-in-itself and consciousness is being-for-itself not because they appear in a certain way but
because they exist differently -- or, to put it another way, the condition of their appearing is different. Objects are what they are; consciousness is what it is not and is not what it is.

The fact that there must be two separated regions of being, Sartre maintains, can be demonstrated from the phenomenological notion of intentionality, or the claim that all consciousness is "consciousness of...". For this reason⁶, the terms being-in-itself and being-for-itself do not mark a break with phenomenology, but rather indicate Sartre's attempt to outline an ontological structure that can support the conclusions of rigorous phenomenological reflection. As Katherine Morris points out, intentionality is not a trivial notion for Sartre, but rather signifies that the world is given along with consciousness as a lived, transcendent certainty, such that no question of skepticism regarding the outside world could arise unless it were also a question about the very existence of consciousness as well (Morris 67). If reflective consciousness alone were intentional, it would be possible that all intentional objects are merely parts, modes, or contents of consciousness itself. However, since the phenomenologist asserts that all consciousness is intentional, Sartre claims that consciousness must have a transcendent object -- i.e., an object whose existence is not identical with its own. From this Sartre quickly reaches the conclusion that there are "two absolutely separated regions of being: the being of the pre-reflective cogito and the being of the phenomenon" (BN 26). This line of reasoning, in which Sartre moves from the peculiar being of consciousness to the

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⁶ But not only for this reason. The ontological categories being-in-itself and being-for-itself are also tied to phenomenological reflection insofar as Sartre intends the concrete descriptions of phenomena and the reflexive elucidation of consciousness engaged in the world, which comprise the greater part of Being and Nothingness, to support this ontological framework. Whether or not he succeeds in doing so has been a matter of much debate; see, e.g., Natanson 1973, Chapter 7; Bartok 2004, Chapter 4.

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independent being of phenomena, is summarized at the end of the section of his Introduction that Sartre titles "the ontological proof":

Consciousness is consciousness of something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself. This is what we call the ontological proof. (BN 23)

Of course, claims Sartre, the two types of being are never given apart from each other; indeed, it is the very combination of their mutual dependence and necessary difference that leads to the conclusion that they both exist. It is this combination that he insists is implied by the "essential character" of intentionality (Ibid.).

It needs no very detailed evaluation of Sartre's reasoning here\(^7\) to suspect that his defense of the independent being of the phenomenon is based less on argument than on a description of intentionality that immediately justifies the desired conclusion. Regardless of whether Sartre succeeds in arguing that all phenomenologists must accept his way of describing intentionality, however, he does succeed in providing an ontology that is able to account for the intentional structure of consciousness without falling into Husserlian idealism. Moreover, because he also argues that the independent being of consciousness just is its intentional activity, or existence, he manages to suggest a plausible phenomenological ontology without being committed to the existence of two sorts of substance; his ontology thus includes two types of being but is not 'dualist' in any traditional sense.

\(^7\) In fact, such an evaluation is beyond the scope of our present study, but the reader who is interested in a more detailed analysis of this argument might see Natanson 1973, Chapter 9; Bartok 2004, Chapter 4.
1.1.2 Reflection, negation, anguish and bad faith

In later chapters I will argue that the ethical life for Sartre is constituted by changes in an individual's mode of being. Some of these alterations to being-for-itself are triggered by encountering other persons while others depend on the choices and self-direction of a conscious being himself. In order to explain these changes later, I need now to describe certain features of the way in which being-for-itself exists in the world prior to taking account of any modifications. First, I will discuss Sartre's account of a conscious being's capacity to reflect on its own activity. Next I will turn to the way in which consciousness determines both being-in-itself and its own being-for-itself through the basic activity of negation and describe how consciousness is always defined by its capacity to withdraw from the world. Finally, I will consider briefly how this activity of negation is linked to freedom and how it results in the fundamental conditions of anguish and bad faith that Sartre argues characterize all conscious life.

As I mentioned earlier, Sartre claims in the Introduction to Being and Nothingness that consciousness' uninterrupted pre-reflective awareness of its activity -- i.e., the pre-reflective cogito -- opens the possibility of a reflective consciousness of consciousness (Cf. BN 13). In fact, Sartre is here reviving a distinction that he makes earlier in The Transcendence of the Ego. There, he explains that "unreflected" (i.e., pre-reflective) consciousness constitutes immediate awareness of the world in which consciousness "transcend[s] itself" by apprehending all aspects of experience as objective:

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8 Sartre distinguishes between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness, as well as between different sorts of reflection, in other works as well. See, e.g., Jeanson Chapters 2-3 for treatments of The Emotions: Outline of a Theory and The Psychology of Imagination that discuss Sartre's comments on reflective consciousness in these works.
Everything happens as if we lived in a world whose objects, in addition to their qualities of warmth, odor, shape, etc., had the qualities of repulsive, attractive, delightful, useful, etc., and as if these qualities were forces having a certain power over us. (TE 58)

In reflection, by contrast, consciousness turns towards its own activity and establishes a distinction between objective and subjective aspects of experience, destroying the spontaneous unity of consciousness as it is actively engaged in the world. This in turn enables consciousness to constitute itself as an ego-subject distinguishable from its activity:

In the case of reflection, and only in that case, affectivity is posited for itself, as desire, fear, etc. Only in the case of reflection can I think 'I hate Peter,' 'I pity Paul,' etc (Ibid.).

Reflection, then, "is a consciousness which posits a consciousness" (62). As in Being and Nothingness, Sartre here stresses that reflection is a secondary move that always depends on unreflective consciousness; so-called "states" of consciousness, such as hatred or pity, appear only secondarily as transcendent objects of consciousness, at which point it also becomes possible to doubt their appearance and one's interpretation of it (61-65).

Importantly, Sartre introduces into this discussion a distinction between "pure" and "impure" reflection. Pure reflection, he asserts, is a "merely descriptive" consciousness of consciousness, which "keeps to the given without setting up claims for the future" (64). This sort of reflection grasps unreflected consciousness qua its instantaneous, transparent activity of positional engagement in the world. Impure reflection, by contrast, "affirms more than it knows" by constituting unreflected consciousness and its contents as transcendent objects that fix the nature and possibilities
of experience (64-5). In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre also refers to impure reflection as "accessory" [*complique*] reflection. By this he means that impure reflection, or the apprehension of unreflective experience in terms of an ego and its psychic objects, just does accompany immediate conscious experience; it is an accomplice of unreflective consciousness (156-7, 273). He also describes this reflective constitution of a transcendent ego as the misguided endeavor to constitute consciousness "as a transcendent in-itself", which fails to recognize that the being of consciousness is that of the for-itself (156, 78). According to Sartre, the constitution of an ego that occurs in impure reflection is a fundamental structure of the for-itself, but it is an error for a free consciousness to identify itself fully with this fixed ego. The error can be recognized as such in purifying, or "nonaccessory", reflection.

In order to explain how Sartre situates his account of impure and pure reflection vis-à-vis the ontology of *Being and Nothingness*, I will need to discuss his account of the way in which the activity of consciousness determines both being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Earlier we saw that being-in-itself is marked by its absolute self-coincidence and lack of change. Being-for-itself, by contrast, introduces activity and passivity and is therefore the means by which change comes into existence; that is, it is the means by which being-in-itself can be differentiated into various determinate existents and manifest spatial and temporal properties. In Chapter 1 of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre reveals that *negation* is the basic activity of consciousness that makes possible such determinations. That is, he claims that it is man qua conscious being who both is and who

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9 See *Being and Nothingness* Part II, Chapter 3, as well as Hartmann, Chapter 2 for more on the way that being-in-itself is determined.
brings about his most basic relation to the being of the transcendent world, and that he
does so by negating the world in various ways. Negation, or "nihilation" [néantisation], is
for Sartre an ontological relation brought about as the for-itself apprehends the in-itself's
plentitude to be limited in determinate ways (BN 38-39). A famous example here is that
of an individual who enters a café looking for his friend Pierre, only to discover that
Pierre is not there (40ff). The café itself, claims Sartre, "is a fullness of being", but the
conscious search for the missing Pierre introduces a new "synthetic organization of all the
object in the café, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. This
organization of the café as the ground is an original nihilation" (40). That Pierre is absent
is not merely a judgment I make based on the being of the café; rather, claims Sartre, his
absence is "given to my intuition" by virtue of the organization imposed on the
transcendent phenomena of the café by my anticipation of Pierre (41-42). Consciousness
is thus identified as the being that introduces "nothingness" into the world, which would
otherwise be characterized completely by the full self-coincidence of being-in-itself.

In the final section of Chapter 1, Sartre argues that being-for-itself must have a
peculiar structure in order for consciousness to fulfill this particular role. If consciousness
introduces nothingness into the world, then consciousness itself does not itself first 'get'
or 'participate' in nothingness by virtue of its transparent, positional engagement in the
world; to the contrary, claims Sartre, this being "must be its own Nothingness" (58). "By
this", he goes on, "we must understand not a nihilating act, which would require in turn a
foundation in Being, but an ontological characteristic of the Being required" (Ibid.). Upon
further examination, the "ontological characteristic" that makes it possible for
consciousness to be the source of nothingness turns out to be nothing less than man's
freedom, which is his capacity to put himself at a certain distance from the world, to question it, and to formulate projects to change it (60). The principal mark of Sartrean freedom is thus the "negative moment" in which consciousness "constitutes itself as negation" by holding itself apart from the world and in particular from its own past (63-64). Importantly, Sartre insists that freedom in this sense is not a property of human nature, but rather a "structure of consciousness", which is to say an ontological structure of being-for-itself (61, 65). Using freedom as an ontological term enables Sartre to link this discussion to his earlier claim that being-for-itself is what it is not and is not what it is. Here, this lack of self-coincidence appears as the capacity for consciousness to pull itself away from the world, or from all prior constitutions of itself. In this free self-distancing, the being of consciousness remains utterly dependent on being-in-itself for its being; however, because being-for-itself is marked fundamentally by its detachment, the relation between the two fundamental modes of being is unstable, or inescapably dynamic. The being of consciousness is such that it perpetually withdraws from, re-imagines, and re-constitutes itself in relation to being-in-itself.

Throughout later sections of Being and Nothingness, Sartre uses the term "transcendence" to name consciousness in its capacity to withdraw from any particular relation with being-in-itself, opposing this to "facticity", which is the concrete realization of being-for-itself in the world. As Sartre's translator Hazel Barnes puts it in her glossary to Being and Nothingness, facticity just is "[t]he for-itself's necessary connection with the In-itself, hence with the world and its own past" (802). Thus, on Sartre's account a conscious being is transcendence because it is free to withdraw from any aspect of the world, but it is also facticity because it necessarily has a "situation" in the world from
which it makes its choices and which it shapes through its activity. This "situation" of being-for-itself is comprised of the demands and endeavors to which it finds itself committed as part of "the world of the immediate, which delivers itself to our unreflective consciousness":

Our being is immediately "in situation"; that is, it arises in enterprises and knows itself first in so far as it is reflected in those enterprises. (77, Cf. 619ff.)

According to Sartre man exists as both facticity and transcendence, both in situation and freely changing his situation, sliding back and forth between what he is and what he freely makes himself. Despite the conceptual tension, these two different relations between being-for-itself and being-in-itself are not meant to capture a lived paradox; rather, claims Sartre, "[t]hese two aspects of human reality are and ought to be capable of a valid coordination" (98).

Note that for Sartre, consciousness is not simply able to constitute itself in relation to being-in-itself; rather, because of its freedom it has "a constantly renewed obligation to remake the Self which designates the free being" (72). Importantly, the "self" for Sartre is the contingent, unstable essence of man, whose only inescapable ontological condition is the existential obligation to freely create that self (Ibid.). In Chapter 3 I will take up Sartre's account of freedom in greater detail. For now, however, it will be enough to point out that on Sartre's account this ontological drama through which the self is created is realized through acts in which man exercises his freedom. This is why Sartre uses questioning, suspending judgment, and apprehending Pierre's absence from the café as examples in which consciousness constitutes itself as a negation
of being-in-itself. Here as before, ontological structure 'explains' phenomenology, not because Sartre rigorously argues for the links between his ontology and these reflective, transcendental analyses of particular human situations, but simply insofar as certain possibilities of conscious experience are correlated with and explained as structures of being-for-itself.

As an ontological characteristic of being-for-itself, freedom is an inescapable feature of conscious -- i.e., human -- existence. According to Sartre, this fundamental lack of self-coincidence, or lack of coincidence between one's past, present, and future relation to being-in-itself, entails other existential structures. One of these is anguish, which Sartre defines as "the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being" (BN 67). That is, anguish is a reflective mode of consciousness motivated by the fact that my conduct and identity are not stable features of my self, but rather are realized only insofar as consciousness determines itself to be in a particular relation to being-in-itself. Freedom is experienced as anguish because the insecurity of being loosed from one's past

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10 These examples should not, however, mislead us into thinking that the activities of being-for-itself are exclusively or primarily mental events. Indeed, perhaps because Sartre first discusses being-for-itself a few hundred pages before he discusses the conscious body, it can be tempting to imagine the activity of being-for-itself continually surpassing its objects as the activity of a disembodied being. This, however, would be a mistake. According to Sartre, the for-itself as a relation to the world is immediately, pre-reflectively embodied because it is immediately, pre-reflectively engaged in the world from a particular contingent situation (Cf. BN Part III, Chapter 2, Section 1). One's own body as one's contingent, material situation is not itself ordinarily given as an object of experience but is rather the necessary mode in which the for-itself relates to the in-itself: "the very nature of the for-itself demands that it be body; that is, that its nihilating escape from being should be made in the form of an engagement in the world" (409). This embodied, situated quality of being-for-itself's existence is, furthermore, revealed primarily "in and through projects of action" since, as we have seen, the basic constitution of the for-itself is to be a relation to being-in-itself by which the latter is surpassed, structured, and modified (425).

11 Sartre points out that the experience of true anguish is in fact rare because most people, most of the time allow themselves to be distracted by activity and thereby absorbed in non-reflective consciousness (BN 73-74). It is thus clear that anguished consciousness must be reflexive to some degree, although it would seem that anguished reflection could be more or less pure, depending on the degree to which one recognizes freedom, or lack of self-coincidence, as a structure of conscious being.
resolutions and the impotency of never being able to fully determine one's future self are distressing (68-69). 12

A second feature of being-for-itself follows both from consciousness' fundamental lack of self-coincidence and from the fact that this lack of self-coincidence is experienced as anguish. This feature is the constant possibility that consciousness will adopt an attitude of "bad faith", which is, roughly, our anguished attempt to conceal from ourselves our unstable, dual nature as transcendence-facticity, so as to avoid the weight of freedom. As Sartre puts it, bad faith is "a nihilating power at the heart of anguish itself", or a mode of being in which "I am anguish in order to flee it" (83). Sartre admits that the idea of a "'self-negation' " or "lie to oneself" in which we both recognize and hide the truth that we experience in anguished reflection is difficult to express without positing a fundamental split within consciousness, a possibility that he vigorously rejects (87-89). 13 It is also difficult to explain how bad faith can be reconciled with his account of the pre-reflective cogito, which suggests that consciousness in bad faith not only takes

12 In this discussion, Sartre also introduces the notion of "ethical anguish", which arises "when I consider myself in my original relation to values" and discover that my own unfounded freedom is "the foundation of values" (76). Presumably the realization that values, like the self and all meanings of being-in-itself, are based solely on my freedom merits this designation of a particular sort of anguish because it is particularly distressing to realize that values, which we fervently although pre-reflectively assume to be 'objective' truths about the world, are in fact products of our own conscious relation to it.

13 The exact relation between anguish, bad faith, the pre-reflective cogito, and the various forms of reflective consciousness is a point of dispute among Sartre scholars. Sartre's description of bad faith as a form of self-negation and as a lie to oneself might seem to suggest that bad faith is an attitude taken up following the constitution of the transcendent ego, and that it is perhaps itself some form of impure reflective consciousness (e.g., BN 87). A detailed look at some of the issues surrounding the exact ontological status of bad faith can be found in Marie Antonietta Perna's 2003 article, "Bad Faith and Self-Deception: Reconstructing the Sartrean Perspective". Perna argues, contra Joseph Catalano (Cf. Good Faith and Other Essays: Perspectives on a Sartrean Ethics), that bad faith should be understood as the ground or motive for engaging in impure reflection. See also Chapter 5 of David Reisman's Sartre's Phenomenology, where Reisman suggests that bad faith can occur before or after reflection. The issue becomes further complicated once one considers being-for-others and asks about the relation between reflection, bad faith, and the type of self-awareness triggered by this additional ontological level.
up a project of bad faith towards itself, but also incorporates a pre-reflective consciousness (of) its bad faith (89). Here we need not examine in detail Sartre's attempts to respond to these problems, which are found in the second chapter of *Being and Nothingness*. Rather, in order to understand the importance of bad faith for Sartrean ethics it will be enough to notice that this common 'attitude' in fact covers a variety of ontological possibilities wherein we constitute our conscious being as though it were pure being-in-itself or pure transcendence, in each case somehow rejecting the true duality of being-for-itself.

Bad faith cannot be overcome by "sincerity", where this means endeavoring "to be what one is", since that would be an effort to constitute consciousness as pure facticity (105ff). Rather, the only hope for escape occurs though "authenticity", a particular "self-recovery of being" that Sartre ostensibly declines to discuss in *Being and Nothingness*, claiming that its "description has no place here" (116, footnote). Sartre's reticence presumably stems from the fact that a discussion of authenticity would introduce the moral implications of bad faith -- and indeed, of his entire ontological framework -- a project he plans to delay until a future work (Cf. BN 798). In fact both Sartre's *Existentialism as a Humanism* and his *Notebooks for an Ethics* do include more developed accounts of authenticity that indicate the links between the fundamental ontological situation of conscious being and its moral possibilities. Furthermore, Sartre's ostensible reserve in *Being and Nothingness* regarding the links between freedom and bad faith as ontological terms and their ethical import is disingenuous, since he does at times offer hints of the direction in which he will develop these terms. Especially tantalizing, for example, is a passage in which Sartre claims that the true ontological relation between...
the for-itself and the in-itself, and the structure of the for-itself's self-determination through negation of the in-itself, is not accessible to unreflective consciousness or to impure reflection but rather "is accessible only to the purifying reflection, with which we are not here concerned" (273). Although Sartre neglects to draw conclusions, the passage clearly links pure reflection to authentic self-understanding and thus to the destruction of bad faith. Hence he suggests that reflection is one way in which consciousness can affect its own ontology by opening itself to recognizing its dual transcendence-facticity.¹⁴

Finally, note that Sartre develops the transcendence-facticity duality during his discussion of bad faith by observing that this attitude can also spring from the attempt to flee other unstable unities that characterize conscious existence. These other "instruments" of bad faith include the dualities of being-for-itself and being-for-others, being-in-the-world and being-in-the-midst-of-the-world, and affirming one's past and dissociating oneself from it (99-100). These dualities are not fully independent from one another, since each stems from Sartre's claim that being-for-itself is what it is not and is not what it is; at root, it is this existential structure that makes bad faith possible. It is interesting to note, however, that Sartre's first allusion to the objectifying effects of being-for-others and the opposition between the look of the Other and my own look occurs in this discussion. Early on, then, Sartre suggests that the unstable duality of conscious being includes the "perpetually disintegrating synthesis" of these two looks,

¹⁴ The idea that bad faith is destroyed by pure reflection is further suggested by Sartre's discussion of the 'faith' of bad faith in Chapter 2 (BN 112-116). The passage suggests that bad faith requires the non-reflective, spontaneous intention to let oneself believe confidently on the basis of non-persuasive evidence. This intention turns out to be unstable because a reflective look would reveal that evidence for belief as such is never fully persuasive, such that no evidence allows one to rest content in constituting the object of belief as a stable in-itself. Pure reflection forces one to abandon the hope for certitude and remain open to the anguished possibility of future evidence that alters one's belief. (Cf. Catalano 138-140 and Morris 86.)
such that the Other's 'external' viewpoint is part of my basic existential situation (*Ibid.*). I will return to this viewpoint of the Other in Chapter 2.

1.2 Levinas on the self

1.2.1 The *il y a* and the hypostasis of the self

Readers familiar with *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being* may suppose that Levinas' account of fundamental human experience prior to the encounter with the Other cannot be an "ontological" account. This is because in his mature ethical works Levinas reserves the term "ontology" for the intentional comprehension of essential structures that is possible only after and through intersubjective experience, despite the fact that he posits and describes various structures of existence prior to the self's encounter with an Other. In fact, these existential structures constitute a foundation for phenomenological description in much the same way that Sartre's account of being-in-itself and being-for-itself does, by offering a description of existence as such that accounts for the varied phenomenalities of worldly experience. Furthermore, in the early writings where Levinas first develops this account of existence, his use of the term 'ontology' is much less deliberate. Prior to *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas is interested in criticizing and revising Heideggerian ontology, but is not much concerned to distance his own account of Being and man's relationship with it from the vocabulary and method of fundamental ontology.\(^\text{15}\) To the contrary, Levinas' early, positive appropriation of Husserl

\(^{15}\) See, e.g., Levinas' Introduction to *Existence and Existent*, wherein he presents his plan for the work as a modification of the Heideggerian problematic. Although his reflections are "governed by a
relies on Heidegger's ontological construal of phenomenology, and his appreciation for the Husserlian project is rooted in the conviction that Husserl proposed "a new conception of being" (The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology lvi). These hints should not be taken as evidence that Levinas' later rejection of "ontology" is insincere or unimportant. However, since he does not later reject the analyses he presents in his early works, one must inquire carefully into what exactly is being denied when Levinas rejects "ontology", keeping in mind that this move is obviously not intended to disallow all descriptions of Being or the existential grounds of subjectivity. This is important because we will eventually see that Levinas, like Sartre, bases his ethical theory upon a phenomenological ontology that allows him to describe ethics in terms of the constitution of the subject. For now, however, it is enough to understand that when comparing their accounts of the fundamental human situation, it does not matter much that Sartre thinks of his account as ontological while Levinas eventually rejects the term, since both are endeavoring to describe the way in which the world and the self acquire their concrete existence and essential qualities only on the basis of more fundamental structures of being that delineate the possibilities of constitution.

profound need to leave the climate of [Heidegger's] philosophy", Levinas states that the beginning of his reflections "are in large measure inspired by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, where we find the concept of ontology and of the relationship which man sustains with Being" (EE 4). These Heideggerian concepts are the central themes presented in the Introduction, where Levinas states that his goal is "to approach the idea of Being in general in its impersonality so as to then be able to analyze the notion of the present and of position, in which a being, a subject, an existent, arises in impersonal Being, through a hypostasis" (3). The topics he plans to discuss, he goes on, "ensue from certain positions of contemporary ontology which have made possible the renewal of the philosophical problematic" (Ibid.). Here and throughout the work, it is evident that Levinas is far from uncomfortable with ontology as a term or as a project; rather, his target is the content of Heidegger's account, and his own goal is to improve on Heidegger's description of Being and subjective existence (4-5).
Although Levinas does not posit two different modes of being like Sartre, he does point to a level of brute, undifferentiated existence that he calls the *il y a* at the origin of pre-intentional experience and intentional consciousness. Levinas first describes the *il y a* and its relation to the conscious self in his early works *On Escape* and *Time and the Other*, developing the *il y a* most fully in *Existence and Existents* and finally linking it to his mature account of the self in *Totality and Infinity*. The *il y a* is occasionally compared to Sartrean nausea because Levinas, like Sartre, suggests that we can encounter this level of pure being by means of certain pre-reflective moods, such as fatigue and indolence, and that this experience of pure being is alienating and burdensome (Cf. *EE* Chapters 1 and 3). In fact, however, Levinas' *il y a* is closer to Sartre's being-in-itself since it is a level or sort of being, while nausea loosely corresponds to what Levinas calls "horror". Horror names our experience of the pure *il y a* and the effects of this experience, which include a menacing loss of subjectivity and personal identity, and the disintegration of the substance and qualities that make worldly objects intelligible (*EE* 55-58). In his description of horror, Levinas deliberately alludes to Sartre, describing horror as "participation in the *there is* . . . that has 'no exits'" (*EE* 56, Cf. 58).

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16 The phrase "*il y a*" is sometimes translated into English as "*there is*". Generally I use the French here, both because the French is often retained in literature on Levinas, and because there is some doubt that "*there is*" is an adequate translation of "*il y a*". In using the phrase "*il y a*", Levinas himself is both translating and modifying Heidegger's "es gibt".

17 Note, however, that Levinas distinguishes between nausea and horror by claiming that although nausea is a "feeling for existence", it "is not yet a depersonalization" or loss of subjectivity, such as occurs in horror (*EE* 56). Whether or not this is a fair reading of Sartre can be disputed; if Sartrean nausea is to be understood as a true experience of pure being-in-itself it is difficult to see how it would not include a depersonalizing moment in which the relation between being-in-itself and being-for-itself that ordinarily constitutes world and self is deconstructed. At the same time, however, Sartre tends to stress that nausea is encountered through bodily experience, which may suggest that some minimal degree of physical individuation cannot be lost in nausea. See Michael Brogan's "Nausea and the Experience of the 'Il y a': Sartre and Levinas on Brute Existence" for a fuller study of the links and differences between Sartre's and
According to Levinas, the 'existent', or man, is constituted from the pure Being of the *il y a* in an "event of birth" that he also calls the "upsurge" or "hypostasis" of the self, subjectivity, or consciousness. This beginning of subjectivity, he asserts, just is the event whereby that self takes up a spatio-temporal position, ordering the *il y a* by demarcating its place within it. Levinas uses the term "upsurge" to indicate that this event is a springing forth from the anonymity of the *il y a*; the self breaks out of anonymous being precisely by making itself present within it as an individual. The term "hypostasis", meanwhile, indicates that this is the event whereby the self *qua* substance is formed.

Levinas even goes so far as to suggest that the fixing of time and place that constitute the self just is an event itself made substantial (Cf. *EE* 71). I will return shortly to Levinas' account of hypostasis and the link between this birth of the self and the foundation of the world's spatiotemporal structure.

Like Sartre, Levinas holds that there is a fundamental, pre-reflective level that marks the human existent's first relation with pure Being (*EE* 10-11). Hence Levinas proposes to explore the existent's primary relationship with existence by analyses of phenomena that are prior to reflection, such as indolence, weariness, and fatigue. I have already noted that according to Levinas the experience of these phenomena reveals the *il y a* itself. This is possible because these phenomena simply are particular modes of the "relationship of an existent with its existence" that Levinas identifies with the birth of the self that he later calls hypostasis (10, Cf. 12, 76ff.). As Levinas puts it, these phenomena "are, in their very occurrence, positions taken with regard to existence" (11). Here I will

Levinas' accounts of pure pre-conscious being. See Francis Jeanson's *Sartre and the Problem of Morality*, pp.110-113 for an explanation of Sartrean nausea that makes use of Levinas' *il y a.*
consider the example of fatigue in particular in order to show how Levinas makes ontological claims on the basis of these phenomena.

To claim that fatigue is a necessary structure of the existent's upsurge is both to see it as the inevitable consequence of all effort and labor and furthermore to assert that effort and labor are conditions of the upsurge itself. In his description of fatigue, Levinas points to the fact that existents engage in activity only by renewing their efforts step by step, repeatedly falling back into fatigue only to pull themselves out of it again, thus overcoming the "lag between a being and itself" (18-21). He then develops an account of the existent's primordial temporality on this basis of this description, identifying each moment in which it renews its efforts as an "instant". Each "instant" is, for Levinas, the step in which hypostasis occurs, since each renewal of effort marks the self's re-dedication of itself to its existence. In a reversal of the Bergsonian account of time, Levinas posits that these discrete instants are the basic units of duration, which is therefore no pure, conscious continuity but rather a multiplicity of stops, each of which marks a break in which the conscious self is re-constituted. The lived "present", consequently, is itself is an "event . . . equivalent to the upsurge of an existent for which to be means to take up being" (25). Once the perpetual tension of fatigue and effort has been identified as the phenomenological reality of temporal existence, Levinas can conclude that "the existence of an existent is by essence an activity"; that is, the bond between existence and essence that gives rise to the conscious, temporal self is essentially the step by step overcoming of fatigue (Ibid.). A methodological parallel can be seen here between Levinas' use of basic existential phenomena such as fatigue and Sartre's description of freedom as it serves to support his account of the way in which the self
constitutes itself and the world by negating being-in-itself. In both cases, phenomenological description serves to identify and develop a necessary structure of concrete existence, which thereafter becomes the motivation for proposing an ontological correlate, a necessary structure of being as such that supports this structural feature of existence. In the case of Sartre, the ontological proposal is that human existence is constituted by free, nihilating action; this proposal depends on the description of consciousness as necessarily both transcendence and facticity. In the case of Levinas, the ontological proposal is that a conscious existent's mode of being is essentially active, and that its activity creates objective time; the descriptive basis for this proposal is Levinas' account of fatigue.

It is not unimportant that Levinas' privileged examples of pre-reflective phenomena in which pure being is experienced -- i.e., indolence, weariness, and fatigue -- are all examples in which a conscious being withdraws from its engagement in the world. The "whole reality" of these phenomena, he claims, is "the event of refusal which they are in their very production, the recoil before existence which makes up their existence" (11). This refusal is not, he stresses, "a theoretical refusal", which would appear as a particular intention or thought of refusal assumed with reference to the world (Ibid.). Rather, in order to understand these phenomena as consequences of the self's hypostasis from the il y a, one must interpret them as "events" of self-distancing in which consciousness withdraws from the weight of existence itself. The negation of pure being that occurs here might initially remind us of Sartre's account of consciousness, the being of which is constituted by a negation of being-in-itself. In fact, Levinas does sometimes link consciousness to negation, even going so far as to suggest that "consciousness, with
its aptitude for sleep, for suspension, for *epoché*" is perhaps "the locus of [the] nothingness-interval" (60). We must be careful, however, for what Levinas is suggesting is in fact somewhat different from Sartre. Levinas' target in his discussion of nothingness is Heidegger, and his goal is to distance himself from Heidegger's account of anxiety, or the attunement of being-towards-death that Levinas interprets as "fear of nothingness" (58). By contrast, Levinas insists that because the perpetual weight of anonymous being is ontologically prior to both nothingness and death, the fear of nothingness is existentially preceded by a "fear of being", or a perpetual but always frustrated yearning for escape from the *il y a*. Thus Levinas, unlike Sartre, holds that it is actually impossible to introduce nothingness within pure being; the *il y a* has no voids and no exits. Consequently the hypostasis of consciousness is not brought about by the introduction of nothingness into being.

Although nothingness is "unthinkable as a limit or negation of being", however, Levinas goes on to suggest that perhaps it is "possible as interval and interruption" (60). In fact, it is this introduction of an 'interval' or a 'break' within the *il y a* that Levinas asserts constitutes the being of consciousness -- i.e., "hypostasis" (64). Again unlike Sartre, Levinas does not base his account on the transcendence of consciousness. For him, the "break" that constitutes consciousness is not a break between consciousness and the *il y a* nor the introduction of nothingness into the *il y a*, but rather a break wherein subjectivity is introduced into the *il y a*.¹⁸ The hypostasis of the self interrupts the anonymity of pure being by introducing a substantive subject:

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¹⁸ Interestingly, despite Sartre's typical emphasis on the free *néantisation* whereby being-for-itself distances itself from being-in-itself, Sartre does in the Conclusion to *Being and Nothingness* suggest that
Hypostasis, the apparition of a substantive . . . signifies the suspension of the anonymous \textit{there is}, the apparition of a private domain, of a noun. On the ground of the \textit{there is} a being arises. (\textit{Ibid.} 83)

The apparition of a substantive existent constitutes a "veritable inversion at the heart of anonymous being" because this existent "bears existing as an attribute, is master of this existing as the subject is master of an attribute" (\textit{TO} 52, Cf. \textit{EE} 83). This claim does not mean that being becomes a property of the subject, or a part of its essence; for Levinas, Being remains radically other than all essential predicates. Rather, the point is that in hypostasis a self-identical existent is constituted, an existent that is no longer indistinguishable from pure being but is rather a subject in relation to his own being. As is evident from experiences like fatigue, the subject is both united to and at a distance from "his being"; hence he has a certain 'mastery' over being but he can also continue to experience it as a weight to be assumed (\textit{EE} 83).

Levinas also describes hypostasis as the event wherein the existent takes up a "position", or localizes himself in space and time (\textit{EE} 64-76). This position-taking actually constitutes both time and space, again as a 'break' in the absolutely undifferentiated \textit{il y a}. According to Levinas, conscious experience is fundamentally constituted by the discrete instants in which the self again and again takes up a position the beginning of consciousness can also be understood as a break that springs forth from and within pure being. Thus he claims that the for-itself "is like a hole in being at the heart of Being", and "the appearance of the for-itself is the absolute event that comes to being" (786, 787). Sartre even goes so far as to assert, "As a nihilation, [the for-itself] \textit{is made-to-be} by the in-itself" (786). To be sure, it is difficult to see how this remark corresponds to Sartre's earlier emphasis on the absolute freedom of the for-itself and the claim that we must posit being-for-itself precisely because being-in-itself is insufficient to produce or account for nothingness (Cf., e.g., 57-8, 63-4, 72). Still, however, the assertion that there is a "primacy of the in-itself" does not necessarily contradict Sartre's general idea that the for-itself arises through freely distancing itself from the in-itself, so long as that primacy does not imply that the for-itself \textit{is determined} to distinguish itself or structure the in-itself in any particular way (787).
and asserts itself as present. Because hypostasis is the adoption of a spatiotemporal position, the break in the anonymous _il y a_ is a reversal of pure being's absolute undifferentiation; the self posits itself even as it distinguishes itself from other 'places' and thereby establishes the possibility that other things can be identified, or differentiated from the _il y a_. It is only because the self constituted in hypostasis is a material existent -- i.e., an existent positioned in a spatiotemporal locale -- that it can identify, experience, and engage other discrete existents.

Notice, however, that the position-taking of the self is not sufficient for the self to engage with other _persons_. On the contrary, Levinas stresses that the self that arises directly from the _il y a_ is a solitary self, a "unity between the existent and its existing" that "does not result from some presupposition about the other" nor does it "appear as a privation of a previously given relationship with the Other" (_TO_ 54). Here Levinas refers to the "solitude" of the self, by which he does not mean loneliness or seclusion from concrete human society; rather, solitude is "the indissoluble unity between the existent and its existing", and it "does not result from some presupposition about the other" (_Ibid._). That the self's original relation with existence is solitary means that there is in Levinas a fundamental ontological level that is in some sense prior to the encounter with the Other. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, Levinas also holds that the Other is, in a different sense, prior to hypostasis and the solitary self; this is both because the Other is the principal condition of reason and intelligibility and because it turns out that he plays a role in bringing about hypostasis. Nevertheless what is important to see now is that Levinas does posit as a condition of the encounter with the Other a self that exists as a
material, sensuous being. Thus Levinas, like Sartre, proposes that the fundamental situation of the conscious self prior to taking account of any encounter with the Other is a material, worldly situation, if not a fully intelligible one.

1.2.2 Sensation and representation: pre-objectifying and objectifying intentionality

According to Levinas, the primary mode in which the self constituted in hypostasis engages with discrete material objects is "enjoyment". In *Time and the Other*, Levinas describes enjoyment as a basic sensory relationship with an object enabled by the subject's own materiality. Again laying claim to a ground more fundamental than Heidegger, for whom the objects of the world are primarily "a system of tools", Levinas suggests that the world is first "an ensemble of nourishments" (*TO* 63). In 'enjoying' objects, we are 'nourished' by their immediate qualities and our direct sensory engagement with them, prior to incorporating them into any reflective or pre-reflective plans of our own. Here Levinas offers concrete examples:

It is perhaps not correct to say that we live to eat, but it is no more correct to say that we eat to live. The uttermost finality of eating is contained in food . . . To stroll is to enjoy the fresh air, not for health but for the air. These are the

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19 This point is sometimes overlooked amidst Levinas' frequent affirmations of the an-archic and absolute priority of the Other, particularly in his later work. Michael Fagenblat details the importance of this claim and argues that the primacy Levinas accords to the existent's solitary self-identity marks a key break with Heidegger and is the most important consequence of his *il y a*; see Fagenblat, "*Il y a du quotidien*: Levinas and Heidegger on the self". According to Fagenblat, "the entire philosophical force of the *il y a* comes from its being anterior to or outside the understanding of the world. Only this anteriority gives credence to the idea that the self maintains its identity without regard for its worldly determinations" (588). On this reading, the early Levinas over-emphasizes this private material identity of the self at the risk of ignoring the role of intersubjectivity in constituting the intelligibility of the world and the self's relation to it. By *Totality and Infinity*, Fagenblat argues, Levinas has revised his account so as to acknowledge that "the conditions for intelligibility belong to the social world", and has re-interpreted the irreducibility of the self as a "surplus of affectivity" over socially constituted meaning (590).

20 Cf. footnote 10 above.
nourishments characteristic of our existence in the world. It is an ecstatic existence -- being outside oneself -- but limited by the object. (Ibid.)

Enjoyment is an "ecstatic" mode of existence because this primary engagement with worldly objects requires the self to effect a break in "the pure and simple identity of hypostasis" (Ibid.). This is so because the sensory experience of objects that constitutes enjoyment is already knowledge of them, an intentional absorption in and distancing from the object (Ibid.). Levinas' privileged metaphor for knowledge here and throughout his corpus is light; hence, he refers to the "luminosity of enjoying" in order to indicate that enjoyment is in fact a variety of intentional awareness. Nevertheless, although this primary sensory experience is, for Levinas, a mode of intentionality, it is not yet an awareness that can be identified with objectifying, representational consciousness. It is not until *Totality and Infinity* that Levinas develops this point explicitly and explains the criticism of Husserl implicit in it.

By positing enjoyment as an intentional awareness prior to objectifying consciousness, Levinas rejects the "Husserlian thesis of the primacy of the objectifying act -- in which was seen Husserl's excessive attachment to theoretical consciousness" (*TI* 123). In fact, Levinas questions this Husserlian thesis throughout his oeuvre, and the basic criticism is already articulated in *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, published in 1930. In that work Levinas is cautiously optimistic that *Ideas* marks an improvement over the *Logical Investigations* in this respect, and seems to hope that Husserl will continue to make room for a non-objectivizing intentionality that would be based on pre-theoretical intuition and motivated by the acknowledgement of "the intentional character of practical and axiological life" (158; Cf. pp. 132-3). By
Totality and Infinity, however, Levinas' condemnation of Husserl and his own investigations into various sorts of non-theoretical consciousness, such as enjoyment, are much more developed. On Levinas' mature account, the problem with asserting that an objectifying act is the prerequisite for all intentionality is that it requires one to adopt the Husserlian Sinngebung as the model for all consciousness of an object; all 'consciousness of' is henceforth theoretical consciousness in the sense that it is accomplished by the bestowal of meaning upon the object (TI 123-124). According to Levinas, this forces one to adopt a representational model for all intentionality because all intentional consciousness is consciousness that determines the object itself, or makes it intelligible only by evading the transcendence of the object and presenting it as the known correlate of immanent consciousness. The problem, to put it another way, is that "the object of representation is reducible to noemata", which means that "the distinction between me and the object, between interior and exterior, is effaced" (124). Although this transcendental structure is, for Husserl, precisely what legitimizes reflection on immanent consciousness as a method whereby we can discover the essential structures of concrete experience, according to Levinas a theory of intentionality thus limited is problematically idealist (126-7). For Levinas, the important question is whether there might be an intentionality, or 'consciousness of', that genuinely maintains the exteriority of the object of consciousness.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\) Note that this interpretation of intentionality, as we have seen, is also important to Sartre. In different ways, both Sartre and Levinas are more concerned to describe how the encounter with transcendence defines experience than in exploring purely immanent conscious life, which Husserl himself presents as the key site of lived experience.
As we will see in Chapter 2, the pursuit of this question, as well as his worry that objectifying intentionality is unable to account for the way we know other persons, eventually leads Levinas to propose that our basic 'experience' of the Other is non-intentional altogether. Although positing this non-intentional mode of experience is perhaps Levinas' most radical move, however, his developed account of fundamental human experience prior to the encounter with the Other also marks a significant expansion of what Husserl took to be the possibilities of intentionality. Here enjoyment is posited as a unique mode of intentionality that maintains the exteriority of the object:

The intentionality of enjoyment can be described by contrast with the intentionality of representation; it consists in holding on to the exteriority which the transcendental method involved in representation suspends. (TI 127)

In enjoyment, one manages to "hold on" to the exteriority of the object because this mode of knowing is uniquely corporeal and rests on the pre-rational sensibility that is the self's immediate relationship with worldly things (127, 135-6). The 'exteriority' maintained in sensible life, however, must not be conflated with the 'exteriority' of the object that is opposed to the inwardness of consciousness in objectifying, thoughtful life. To see this, consider Levinas' claim in an essay written just a few years before Totality and Infinity that a purely "living being" -- i.e., a being prior to thought, whose consciousness just is the pure sensibility of enjoyment -- has "a consciousness without problems, that is, without exteriority; it has a purely inner world whose center it occupies" ("The Ego and the Totality" 26, italics added). At first glance, it may seem that Levinas contradicts this claim in Totality and Infinity, but this is not really the case. Levinas' position in his earlier essay is that the 'world' in enjoyment is not yet experienced as something opposed to the
conscious self, but rather appears to be merged with consciousness as the situation in which it is immersed. The exteriority of sensible things is maintained in the intentionality of enjoyment insofar as the corporeal positing of the self enables us to be determined by these things even as we also determine them; however, this exteriority is also lost in the sense that there is not yet a reflective interiority opposed to it (TI 128, "Ego" 26).

Meanwhile, in objectifying intentionality the exteriority of the things in the world is maintained insofar as these are the objects of an independent consciousness, but it is lost insofar as this form of intentionality grasps the object only by confining its alterity within its own representational comprehension ("Ego" 27-28, TI 168-9).

Perhaps with this nuanced understanding of exteriority in mind, Levinas stresses in *Totality and Infinity* that the worldly things of which one is primordially sensible are not yet in a 'world', since that structure is an effect of representational consciousness (TI 127, 135). Levinas even goes so far as to say that "[e]njoyment precisely does not reach them qua things", because

> In enjoyment the things are not absorbed in the technical finality that organizes them into a system. They take form within a medium [milieu] in which we take hold of them. They are found in space, in the air, on the earth, in the street, along the road. (130)

We must avoid reading terms like 'street' and 'road' here as though these named worldly objects with properties and histories; in enjoyment, they are merely situations in which we are "steeped", which serve as the background for our primordial sensible experience (131). The fact that the objects of enjoyment are sensibly known but not yet theoretically grasped can be described as an "overflowing" of sensation, or the excess of what is given in the intentionality of enjoyment over what can be intended in an objectifying, meaning-
bestowing act (128, 141). Levinas calls that which overflows in sensation "the element", and offhandedly links it to the *il y a* (141-142). The suggestion here seems to be that the exteriority of the objects we enjoy derives from the fact that they are not yet fully determinate existents. Enjoyment would thus be an experience of objects different from the objectifying intentionality of theoretical consciousness in that it fails to mask the relationship between particular material objects and the brute, undifferentiated existence that sustains them.

Just as Levinas rejects the idea that the hypostasis of the self from the *il y a* is a negation of pure being, so too he insists that the primordial differentiation of and engagement with objects that occurs in enjoyment "is not negativity" but rather "agreeableness of life" (*TI* 149). In enjoyment, we experience the satisfaction of sensible needs simply through an immediate engagement with the pre-represented, elemental world; agreeable satisfaction is thus the "primordial relation of man with the material world" (*Ibid.*). According to Levinas, this immediate satisfaction of need is the key to both "happiness" and the "interiority" of the subject. It is pure happiness because it occurs prior to any reflection or project that we design to satisfy ourselves, and prior to any feeling of "insecurity of the world" or "concern for the morrow" (150). Meanwhile, it constitutes the fundamental "interiority" or "separation" of the subject not because it enacts a dialectical opposition between the subject and the exteriority of the object, but rather because it enables him to take pleasure in the pure materiality of the world without needing to sacrifice or oppose himself to any concrete object or other person (148-149). Thus the immediate agreeableness of the 'world' experienced in enjoyment is experienced as a "fundamental security" that enables the self to remain happily independent; this
primordial interiority, however, is not that of reflective consciousness, but is rather an immediate, sensible, "animal condition" (Ibid.).

Although he insists that the agreeableness of enjoyment and the interiority it enables constitute a basic ontological level, Levinas does not contend that this level is the whole story regarding the self prior to the encounter with another person. On the contrary, the self tends towards representational consciousness and its objectifying intentionality as ontological structures, which follow from enjoyment and depend on the possibilities opened by this primordial intentionality. The possibility of representational consciousness, which Levinas also refers to as "recollection", arises first when enjoyment is troubled by "the essentially uncertain future of sensibility" (TI 150). Unable to rest fully content in the present agreeableness of the elemental, man worries about the satisfaction of tomorrow's needs (Ibid.). Recollection results as a "suspension" of enjoyment "in view of a greater attention to oneself, one's possibilities, and the situation", which enables one to make plans, labor, reshape, and possess the world, all with the goal of adapting the world to ensure one's future security (154). According to Levinas, this new mode of consciousness is intentional in the Husserlian sense, although the spontaneous intentionality of enjoyment is never abandoned; as he puts it, "the consciousness of a world is already consciousness *through* that world" (153). All engagement with the world as such is therefore dependent on our primordial grasp of things in enjoyment:

Every manipulation of a system of tools and implements, every labor, presupposes a primordial *hold* on the things, possession, whose latent birth is marked by the home, at the frontier of intentionality. (163)
Levinas thematizes the movement towards recollection as the creation of a "home", a "habitation", and "the event of dwelling", because this transition marks a withdrawal from the "elemental" medium of enjoyment (Cf. e.g., 152-3). Man's "dwelling", a new interiority, is his concrete position in the world, which is now comprehended as a totality of objects. Note that Levinas holds that the creation of a "home", which is the birth of basic representational consciousness, depends on intimacy with another person, and hence on a primordial sort of intersubjectivity (Cf. 148, 155). The Other who founds the home, however, cannot be identified with the radically transcendent Other who establishes true intersubjectivity and ethics for Levinas.\(^22\) Rather, the Other whose alterity breaks the separation of enjoyment is not transcendent but familiar; she is, claims Levinas, "the Woman", whose discreet but ultimately "comprehensible" presence "is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation" (155).

Once the world is comprehended as a totality of objects in representational consciousness, those objects are no longer experienced merely as sensible, but rather acquire a substantiality and solidity through labor (161). Levinas identifies the possession of objects exercised in labor with the comprehension of objects in contemplation, insofar as both are a "grasp" on things made possible by the constitution of the world as substantial rather than merely elemental (161, 163).\(^23\) This grasp both recognizes and suspends the "independent being" of the thing insofar as it is a subordination of the

\(^{22}\) More on the transcendent Other in Chapter 2.

\(^{23}\) Cf. "The Ego and the Totality" 27, where Levinas notes that "thought does not spring forth from labor", nor is thought an interruption or neutralization of labor. Rather, the ontological positing of a thinking being occurs in labor itself: "The positing of man, the rational animal, in being is brought about as will and labor".
thing's elemental phenomenality in favor of its objective, substantial qualities, which can be represented and hence possessed by intentional consciousness (163, 168ff.). Thus, as previously discussed, it is in the move from enjoyment to thought that the object acquires an objective exteriority even as it looses its immediate sensible exteriority.

Because this exteriority, or distance between the thinking subject and the world, enables representational consciousness "to substitute itself after the event" for the pre-theoretical, lived consciousness of sensibility, Levinas identifies this structure as the "freedom" of representation (TI 169). In Time and the Other and Existence and Existent, Levinas had already discussed a "first freedom" that is identified with hypostasis itself; this freedom is "not yet the freedom of free will", but rather "the freedom of the existent in its grip on existing" (TO 54). According to Levinas, this concept of a first freedom is necessary in order to account for the way in which existence appears to the self as a burden, since it is only insofar as the self is 'free' with regard to its existence that it can long for escape, and that its upsurge can be thought of as the achievement of a "mastery over existing" (EE 90, TO 55). It is clear that this freedom is a different concept from the absolutely 'free will' of many modern and contemporary philosophers. First, the self's grip on existence is "immediately limited by its responsibility" for its own temporal self-constitution from the il y a. More importantly, this freedom just is the ontological situation of the self vis-à-vis its own existence and not a power or capacity of the self to engage in the world. While Sartre's freedom is also a relation between the self and pure
existence, Levinas resists any assimilation of his "first freedom" to that account by rejecting the idea that this freedom is in any way a negation of the world (EE 90).

Just as Levinas' "first freedom" cannot be easily compared with other philosophical accounts, the "freedom of representation" that he discusses in Totality and Infinity does not fare much better. Here freedom is identified with representational consciousness and knowledge, and is described as the source of a "constitutive conditioning" that remakes and obscures pre-theoretical experience (169). While it is associated with "negating or possessing the non-me", as in Sartre, this activity of negation does not constitute the basic ontology of the conscious self but rather a later mode of engagement with the world in which the knowing self reduces known objects to the totality of comprehension (87). Most importantly, Levinas argues that the freedom of representation depends on the familiar alterity of the feminine Other who sustains my habitation in the world, even as it is challenged by the arrival of the absolutely transcendent Other (170-171). However, because Levinas' most illuminating and evocative comments regarding freedom describe this challenge, here I must pause my discussion until after I have presented his account of this absolutely other Other.

1.3 On "ontology" and "metaphysics"

In the preceding sections, I have outlined the key aspects of Sartre's and Levinas' accounts of the self that serve as the basis for their accounts of intersubjective and ethical

Note, however, that the explicit target of this rejection is Heidegger, not Sartre: "Here freedom does not presuppose a nothingness to which it casts itself; it is not, as in Heidegger, an event of nihilation; it is produced in the very 'plenum' of being through the ontological situation of the subject" (EE 90).
experience. Along the way, I have also suggested that these accounts are best read as making ontological claims about the relation of the self to its being and its modes of existence. Before concluding this chapter, however, a few remarks are in order regarding the sort of fundamental ontology that has been offered and its relationship to the phenomenological methods of Sartre and Levinas.

First, note that neither Sartre nor Levinas offers an account of human nature or substantial essence, characterizing human consciousness instead in terms of its mode of existence, or way of being in the world. This move can be clearly distinguished from ontologies that minimize or altogether reject the idea that there are manifold senses of existence and distinguish what is particular to man in terms of his essential qualities. Sartre's approach, by contrast, is to re-define human nature in terms of the way in which man makes himself exist individually and concretely in the world -- namely, by appropriating his situation through free acts of nihilation that are in fact "a choice of being" (BN 764). In his Notebooks for an Ethics, Sartre explains the modified notion of man's "nature" that he began to develop in Being and Nothingness. Here he claims that "[e]xistential ontology is itself historical" and suggests that man chooses his nature through the personal and social history that he creates on the basis of his originally inauthentic self-constitution:

How then do I explain nature, since man is free? I do not deny that there is a nature; that is, that one begins with flight and inauthenticity. But the question is whether this nature is universal or historical . . . Nature would be the historical fact that human beings have a nature, that humanity in choosing oppression to begin its history chose to begin with nature. In this sense the perpetual dream of an antiphysis would be the historical and perpetually utopian possibility of another choice. Nature is one's choice of oneself in the face of other people's oppressive freedom. (NE 6)
It is important here to notice that by formulating this "historical" account of human nature, Sartre suggests that an existentialist account can reclaim traditionally essentialist terms and use them in the development of its own ontology. For Sartre, then, man's "nature" includes the universal starting point that is inauthenticity, or bad faith, as well as one's constant obligation to choose oneself by engaging in free projects. As we have seen, Sartre argues that each person "begins with flight and inauthenticity" because impure reflection, wherein consciousness constitutes itself in the mode of being-in-itself, or as an ego, is the inescapable 'accomplice' of unreflective consciousness. Yet because consciousness truly is being-for-itself, the imperative to choose one's own projects and thereby freely constitute meanings, values, and the self is also inescapable. The account here is something of a revised essentialism, whereon man's "nature" does not indicate a fixed essence but rather certain ineliminable structures of an individual human history. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, Sartre returns to this topic later in the Notebooks, where he develops the idea that man's nature or essence is actually the creative activity of self-formation, which turns out to be necessarily linked to self-giving and a relation with an Other (Cf. §3.1).

Levinas' ontology of the self is likewise 'existentialist' in its refusal to characterize man in terms of a fixed nature. Unlike Sartre, Levinas does not explicitly re-define the concept of human nature in terms of historical self-creation, but his idea that man's essence is to be "the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it" can be read as a variation on this notion of self-formation.

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25 I should note that the preceding passage, like much of the Notebooks, exhibits Hegelian and Marxist influences that I will unfortunately be unable to explore in depth in this dissertation. Those interested in these influences on Sartre's oeuvre might look at Thomas Flynn's work.
creation (*TI* 36). In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas describes a "primal work of identification", which turns out to be the work of sustaining a self-identical 'I' "in sojourning, in *identifying oneself* by existing here *at home with oneself*"; clearly this is a description of a self that identifies itself by establishing its own way of being in the world (36-37). Thus the 'nature' of the worldly self can thus be thought of as a consequence of self-creative activity.

Although the discussion in *Totality and Infinity* indicates that an existent's self-identification explains the mode and appearance of his relation with existence, Levinas resists the idea that the fact of this relation -- i.e., the fact of hypostasis -- can itself be explained. Thus in *Time and the Other* he writes:

> Consciousness is a rupture of the anonymous vigilance of the *there is*; it is already hypostasis; it refers to a situation where an existent is put in touch with its existing. Obviously I will not be able to explain why this takes place. (*TO* 51)

However, although Levinas declines to explain why the self arises from anonymous being, he does offer in *Totality and Infinity* what seems to be a higher-level explanation for the hypostasis of the self. A self-identical I, he claims, is required as a "point of departure" from which the self can enter into relation with a transcendent Other:

> The alterity, the radical heterogeneity of the other, is possible only if the other is other with respect to a term whose essence is to remain at the point of departure, to serve as *entry* into the relation, to be the same not relatively but absolutely. *A term can remain absolutely at the point of departure of relationship only as I.* (*TI* 36)

Note that the order of explanation here is not fully clear, so that reading Levinas at face value one may get the impression that the self-identical I is required so that the Other can be absolutely heterogeneous to it, as though the I grants permission for its experience of
transcendence. As we will see, however, it is clear from Levinas' account of the relation with the Other that this relation is always the primary reality upon which other claims, especially ontological ones, are justified. Here Levinas is really asserting that the evidence of a relation between the self and a radically alternate Other indicates that there must be a self-identical I whose "essence" is to be a "point of departure".

In fact Levinas always places the relation with the Other first in any order of explanation, and this relation grounds his foundational claims regarding the self and its essence-making relation to existence. If I were to use the language that Levinas develops in *Totality and Infinity*, I might express this point by saying that "metaphysics precedes ontology", or, alternately, "ontology presupposes metaphysics" (*TI* 42, 48). Both of these are formulas that Levinas uses to signal the relation between (1) 'ontology', the knowledge of Being as such and its relation with the existent -- e.g., the foundations of the self we have just explored, and (2) 'metaphysics', a relationship with the Other that is in fact "the ultimate relation in Being", and which grounds all knowledge of Being (*Ibid.*). Note that metaphysics, for Levinas, is not a different sort of knowledge or conceptual scheme, but rather a relationship. Ontology, meanwhile, becomes a

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26 In the passage under consideration, Levinas takes pains to associate ontology as opposed to metaphysics with conceptualization, or the act of grasping an individual thing "in its generality" by bringing it under a concept. He references Plato and Berkeley as philosophers who remain committed to this "ontological" mode of seeking truth, and also claims that Husserl's idea of horizon "plays a role equivalent to that of the concept in classical idealism; an existent arises upon a ground that extends beyond it, as an individual arises from a concept" (*TI* 45). By contrast, the "metaphysical" relation with the other refuses to subordinate the alterity of the Other to any such "ground that extends beyond it" (42-48).

In view of these comments, it is tempting to claim that metaphysics according to Levinas is a non-conceptual relation -- or perhaps, because metaphysics grounds ontology, a pre-conceptual relation. Nevertheless, although Levinas says that the relationship with the Other "commands" "the comprehension of Being in general", he also asserts that "[t]his relation is not prephilosophical" (47). As I will discuss in Chapter 2, in other passages he also explicitly describes the encounter with the Other in terms of one special concept, the idea of infinity (c.f., e.g., *TI* 48ff., 196-7, 204). These sorts of comments raise an
catchphrase for all conscious, intentional awareness insofar as this is always, in varying
degrees, formulated in concepts and dependent on a representational scheme. That
Levinas is radically re-defining these terms is obvious; why he does so will become clear
only after I have discussed his account of the relation with the Other.

In Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being, Levinas extensively develops
the idea that the relationship of 'metaphysics' gives consciousness access to an exteriority
that it does not intentionally constitute and which is the ground for all 'ontology'. In the
earlier work, Levinas is explicitly concerned to develop these terms as such, while in the
later one he focuses on defending the idea of an encounter with transcendence -- i.e., the
metaphysical relationship. The attempt to justify the possibility of 'metaphysics' in
Otherwise than Being leads Levinas to replace his earlier ontological language with
language that does not tempt the reader to conceptualize or representationally
comprehend the encounter with the Other. In an autobiographical essay, he explains this
shift in tone:

The ontological language which Totality and Infinity maintains in order to
exclude the purely psychological significance of the proposed analyses is
hereafter avoided. And the analyses themselves refer not to the experience in
which a subject always thematizes what he himself equals, but to the
transcendence in which he is responsible for that which his intentions do not
encompass. ("Signature" 189)

important question about the link between metaphysics and ontology, or between the relation with an Other
and the conceptual order he grounds. I will address this question in the following chapter. For now, it is
perhaps best to think of metaphysics as a supra-conceptual relation with the Other, since whatever else we
might be able to say about the link between metaphysics and conceptualization or ontology, Levinas is
clear that the Other "overflow[s] its idea", or exceeds any finite concept under which we might attempt to
comprehend him (47).
Despite this shift away from *Totality and Infinity's* ontological language, it is clear that Levinas continues to maintain the sharp dichotomy between our experience of Being that can be 'thematized', or conceptualized, and our acquaintance with the transcendence that he cautiously claims 'is' "otherwise than Being" (Cf., e.g., *TI* 42-48, *OB* 3-4).

Furthermore, while *Totality and Infinity* certainly contains much more developed accounts of enjoyment, habitation, and the primordial 'I', Levinas does touch explicitly on ontological themes such as the hypostasis of the self and the conceptualizing intentionality of consciousness in *Otherwise than Being* (Cf. 99-109).

Like Levinas, Sartre also reworks the terms 'ontology' and 'metaphysics' as well as the difference between them. For Sartre, these terms are neither as thematic nor as consistently circumscribed as they are in Levinas, but his occasional explicit remarks about the terms help illuminate Sartre's understanding of his own project. In the Conclusion to *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre indicates that he uses the term 'ontology' for the description of the structures of being, foremost of which is the split between being-for-itself and being-in-itself (*BN* 788). The study of this fundamental structure of being can be thought of either in terms of the "ancient duality 'consciousness-being'" or, as Sartre prefers, in terms of "two dimensions of being" which together comprise the phenomenon of Being (794). Which of these two approaches should be taken, however, is not itself a matter of ontology but rather must be decided by 'metaphysics', which Sartre describes as "the study of individual processes which have given birth to *this* world as a concrete and particular totality" (794, 788). Metaphysics here appears as something like applied ontology insofar as it investigates the particular events by means of which
ontological structures have been realized in our concrete world. Hence, writes Sartre, "metaphysics is to ontology as history is to sociology" (Ibid.). According to Sartre, Ontology furnishes us two pieces of information that serve as the basis for metaphysics: first, that every process of a foundation of the self is a rupture in the identity-of-being of the in-itself (788)

and second,

that the for-itself is *effectively* a perpetual project of founding itself qua being and a perpetual failure of this project (789).

It is interesting to note that these descriptions of the way in which the for-itself comes to be make it seem that the for-itself is the agent that brings about its own being: the for-itself ruptures the identity of the in-itself; it is the project of "founding itself qua being". Sartre, however, also describes this process as a hypothetical event wherein the in-itself gives rise to the for-itself, commenting, "If the in-itself were to found itself, it could attempt to do so only by making itself consciousness", and going so far as to claim, "Ontology will therefore limit itself to declaring that everything takes place as if the in-itself in a project to found itself gave itself the modification of the for-itself" (789-790).

The suggestion that the passive in-itself could 'found itself' and thereby give rise to the for-itself is a strange proposal coming from Sartre, since he also claims that being-for-itself just is the project of founding itself. How, one wonders, could these two realms of being found themselves *and* each other? Sartre does not resolve such a question, nor does he think it is the task of ontology to do so. Either ontological model -- being-in-itself giving rise to being-for-itself in an attempt to found itself, or being-for-itself founding being-in-itself as a result of its nihilating consciousness -- fits the ontological data, which
includes our pre-ontological comprehension of being and the descriptions of being-in-itself and being-for-itself that are made possible by our experience of being. It is, furthermore, left to metaphysics to take up the question of why the structures of being occur as they do. This means that metaphysics is an inquiry into the "prehistoric" genesis of the two regions of being, not because it asks about what was "before" being-for-itself -- a question Sartre says makes "no sense" -- but rather because it determines the "meaning and nature" of ontological structures; it

form[s] the hypotheses which will allow us to conceive of this process [i.e., the founding of the regions of being] as the absolute event which comes to crown the individual venture which is the existence of being (788-790).

Thus ontology describes the structures of being and may include an account of certain generalities or 'rules' that comprise that structure, but it is metaphysics that theorizes about the way in which the structure is actually realized.

Given this account of 'ontology' and 'metaphysics', it is not accidental that Sartre subtitles *Being and Nothingness* "A phenomenological essay on ontology".27 Indeed, Sartre clearly aims in the work to present the fundamental 'ontological' structure of the world beginning from a phenomenological attitude, merely paving the way for a systematic 'metaphysics' that would outline the meanings of world events concretely established by the activity of the for-itself (769-770, 795). It may seem that in so doing he neglects to pursue the most interesting implications of his ontological scheme. This

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27 Or "An essay in phenomenological ontology", depending on one's preferred translation. Regardless of how we interpret the French "Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique", however, the idea of an ontology developed from a phenomenological approach is conveyed, and the question of how ontology and phenomenology are to be combined is provoked.
move, however, is an important indication of his phenomenological method. Sartre claims that metaphysics endeavors but fails "to penetrate to the pure in-itself" because it addresses "revealed being", which can only function as "a symbol of being-in-itself" (770). In discovering what Sartre calls the "metaphysical purport of all intuitive revelation of being", we uncover the lived meaning of substances and qualities and can in this way explain our physical and psychological experience of them (Ibid.). We must appeal to ontology, however, in order to unveil "the true origin of the meanings of things and their true relation to human reality", because only ontology "take[s] its place on the plane of transcendence" beginning from the perspective of the cogito (769). In Being and Nothingness, Sartre takes up ontological questions, or questions regarding the structure of being, precisely because these are the ones that he asserts are suggested by phenomenology's transcendental approach, wherein the structures of experience reveal the structures of what is.

1.4 A few remarks on phenomenological ontology

That both Sartre and Levinas make room for ontology may seem to conflict with the idea that each of these philosophers works within the phenomenological tradition. Since more than a little ink has been spilled recently debating the purity of various ostensible phenomenologists, this consideration merits some further comment. Indeed, it should be admitted that neither Sartre nor Levinas attempts to carry out a Husserlian epoché, if we understand this as a complete bracketing of transcendent, and particularly ontological questions. Yet I have also suggested over the course of this chapter that the ontology developed by Sartre and Levinas does not mark a break with their
phenomenological analyses, but rather grows out of their phenomenology and supports it. In order to support this suggestion, it will be helpful to discuss more directly the sense in which Sartre and Levinas remain engaged in a phenomenological project despite -- or perhaps by means of -- their turn to ontology. It is, of course, not my goal in these brief pages to comprehensively characterize the senses in which Sartre and Levinas each is and is not a 'phenomenologist'. However, drawing on the accounts of fundamental human experience that I have just outlined, it will be possible to defend the claim that Sartre's and Levinas' approaches are meaningfully 'phenomenological'. To identify broadly the primary sense in which Sartre and Levinas remain phenomenologists, one need only observe that each undertakes a careful study of the structure and contents of conscious experience in order to describe the foundations of the subject-object correlation and identify its conditions. Each, furthermore, accomplishes this by developing the Husserlian notion of intentionality, focusing on the ways in which the intentional character of consciousness enables its lived encounter with what is transcendent to it.

For Sartre, this project means accepting the pre-reflective *cogito* as one's starting point, describing the phenomena that appear there and the way in which they do so in order to eventually reach the being of consciousness itself. In utilizing the *cogito* this way, Sartre believes that he is avoiding mistakes made by Descartes, Husserl, and Heidegger (*BN* 119-120). The first of these, he claims, "fell into the error of substance" by attempting to pass from the functional description of consciousness to its existence "without a conducting thread" (i.e., the analysis of intentionality and modes of phenomenality constituted by conscious function). Husserl, meanwhile,
warned by this error, remained timidly on the plane of functional description. Due to this fact he never passed beyond the pure description of the appearance as such; he has shut himself up inside the *cogito* and deserves -- in spite of his denial -- to be called a phenomenalist rather than a phenomenologist. His phenomenism at every moment borders on Kantian idealism. Heidegger, wishing to avoid that descriptive phenomenalism which leads to the Megarian, antidialectic isolation of essences, begins with the existential analytic without going through the *cogito*. But since the *Dasein* has from the start been deprived of the dimension of consciousness, it can never regain this dimension. (*BN* 119-120)

Sartre's goal, therefore, is to describe the structures and meaning of human existence in the world starting from the dimension of consciousness that initiates all experience. His rejection of what he takes to be Heidegger's attempt to bypass consciousness is an affirmation of the Husserlian endeavor, despite his refusal to accept Husserl's limited (i.e., idealist) conclusions.

If Sartre starts out, with Husserl, in the interiority of the *cogito* as the source of conscious experience, he also continues with him a step further to the intentional character of that experience. As we have already seen, Sartre thinks that a proper clarification of consciousness' intentional character supports the realist conclusion that the objects of consciousness are things in the world, not representations or ideas of them. Thus Sartre embraces Husserl's position that what is given in experience are real objects in the world. As Sartre sees it, however, Husserl "is totally unfaithful to his principle" when he "makes of the *noema* an unreal, a correlate of the *noesis*" (*BN* 23). In doing so, Husserl suggests that there is some third thing between consciousness and object -- that is, the *noema* 'within' consciousness, which is neither consciousness (i.e., the transparent, active awareness of an object) nor an object of consciousness. This error, thinks Sartre, is further confirmed by Husserl's tendency after the *Logical Investigations* to imagine the ego as a transcendental I within consciousness rather than as a transcendent object of
consciousness, or a reified object constructed in impure reflection.\textsuperscript{28} Husserl thus seems to grow increasingly idealist: he holds that consciousness is something more than its mere awareness of objects, that consciousness understands its objects by means of meanings that it constructs, and that these meanings cannot be reduced to the things themselves. In \textit{Transcendence of the Ego} and \textit{Being and Nothingness}, Sartre aims to protect Husserl's notion of intentionality against what he takes to be Husserl's own misunderstandings, insisting on the transparency of consciousness and arguing that this transparency is the linchpin of a realist account whereon worldly objects themselves are given in intentional consciousness. Sartre's modification of the concept does not mark a break with Husserl, however; on the contrary, it marks an attempt by a devoted disciple to defend what he saw as Husserl's key insight. For Sartre, free consciousness bestows meaning on the world since it is being-for-itself that structures being-in-itself through its activity of knowing, its \textit{neantisation}; however, no subjective idealism is thereby implied because consciousness is nothing other than its awareness of the world it experiences. In putting the notion of intentionality to his realist ends, Sartre continues the original Husserlian endeavor of inquiring into the essential structures of consciousness in order to philosophize about the real, given world.

In view of his existentialist account of intentionality, it is clear that Sartre's ontological interests flow naturally from phenomenology, as an inquiry into the relation between the intentional existence of meanings and the existence of consciousness that establishes them. Indeed, from Sartre's perspective a phenomenological ontology is a key

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. John Duncan's "Sartre and Realism-All-the-Way-Down", p. 7.
complement of phenomenology insofar as its descriptions of the structures of consciousness are supposed to account for the relation between the conscious subject and objects in an actual world. Because this relation is conditioned by the relative existential situation of subject and object, a situation inescapably indicated by certain fundamental attitudes and experiences such as nausea and bad faith, the endeavor leads unavoidably to ontology. As Francis Jeanson, one of Sartre's early advocates, explains,

Husserl's error will henceforth be characterized for us by his conviction that it is still possible to describe the essential structures of consciousness even after it has been emptied of all reference to the fundamental attitudes of the subject in the world . . . The result is that he shuts himself up within an artificial ontology which has no possibility of ever passing back to that effective aspect of behavior which he resolved to set aside at the start. (Jeanson 89)

Here Jeanson articulates the rationale behind Sartre's rejection of Husserl's attempt to parenthesize the existential import of conscious acts: the transcendental reduction does not yield a pure descriptive science of essential structures but rather an impure descriptive science accompanied by an "artificial" ontology. Again, Sartre aims to correct the confusion, not by rejecting the phenomenological approach as such but by pursuing the full consequences of intentionality.

Thus Sartre rejects Husserl's transcendental reduction as flawed and maintains that to discover the essence of phenomena requires taking into account the self's worldly, or existential, engagement with them. Although the reduction as the absolute suppression of existence claims proves impossible, however, this does not mean that Sartre's approach cannot be understood as employing a modified reduction. Katherine Morris, for example, argues that Sartre employs a two-step reduction that corresponds to Husserl's transcendental and eidetic reductions (Morris 27-34). This modified reduction involves
(1) a deliberate suspension of the familiarity of worldly objects, since this familiarity frequently blocks our honest description of these phenomena, and (2) an exhibition of the meaning, or essence, of phenomena which consists in relating them to a fundamental aspect of human reality. Thomas Busch, by contrast, distinguishes three different uses of the reduction in Sartre's oeuvre. In Sartre's early *Transcendence of the Ego*, Busch points out, the époqué is linked to the anxiety that provokes reflection and thereby leads back to an informal rather than systematic examination of pure consciousness, while in *Nausea* and *The Psychology of Imagination* the reduction reveals not only the constitutive activity of consciousness but also the distinction between meaning and existence (Busch 18-23, 27). In *Being and Nothingness*, he argues, the reduction is identified as the suspension of the absolute values and the ideal of absolute being that haunts immediate consciousness, which enables a reflective inquiry into the true constitution of values and hence becomes the foundation for ethics (25, 27). In fact, Sartre does not commit himself to any particular interpretation of the reductions, as he does with intentionality, so it would be unwise to interpret him as pursing any consistent bracketing, whether it be of the world's familiarity or the assumptions of impure reflection. Sartre does, however, consistently pursue the significance of consciousness' own presence to itself and the ways in which consciousness is saturated by being, or what Jeanson calls "the shock of a presence that is not oneself" (Jeanson 89). Insofar as he adopts the starting point of the *cogito* in order to ask after the transcendental conditions of the relation between these two modes of presence, he indeed performs a reduction on our natural attitude.29

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29 See Busch's 1980 article for an argument that Sartre is much truer to Husserlian phenomenology than is generally admitted. According to Busch, 'phenomenology' as such involves an ambiguous double
Levinas too pursues phenomenology as the elucidation of the correlation between consciousness and the beings it knows through analyzing the structure and contents of experience. In a series of essays first published between 1959 and 1965 that can be found in the collection Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas discusses various aspects of phenomenological methodology and the concept of intentionality in detail. In these essays, his criticism of Husserlian representationalism is frequently made fruitful as Levinas discusses the positive contributions and possibilities opened by Husserl's philosophy. Here Levinas makes it clear that he considers the search for pre-intentional foundations of knowledge to be an exemplary aim of phenomenology:

A fully phenomenological way of proceeding is to discover, for relations of knowledge, foundations that properly speaking lack the structure of knowledge, not because these foundations impose themselves without certainty, but because as anterior and conditioning they are more certain than certainty, more rational than reason. ("Reflections on Phenomenological Technique" 101)

Levinas acknowledges that Husserl himself did not admit, let alone pursue, a nonobjectifying basis for intentions that constitute knowledge of the object. Still, he argues that Husserl's accounts of sensibility and passivity open the door to such a basis, and "lead us to what lies on the hither side of the subject-object correlation and its privilege" (Ibid.). Strikingly, he even points to the fifth Cartesian Meditation, wherein Husserl articulated the account of intersubjectivity that Levinas wholeheartedly rejects, as

emphasized "on the one hand, upon the cogito, reflection, and constitution, and on the other, upon description, lived experience, and the life-world" (28). Sartre, he argues, generally follows Husserl in developing the first emphasis while Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty tend towards the latter. Hence, he concludes, "Sartre was the more observant of Husserl's programmatic. Sartre's entire thought, not just the work up to and including [Being and Nothingness] is animated by the phenomenological viewpoint: the reduction, intentionality, constitution" (Ibid.).
an example of a site wherein Husserl claimed to discover a foundation for objective knowledge, namely in primordial egological knowledge (*Ibid.*).

The interpretation of phenomenology's project as a search for the conditions of the correlation between object and knowing subject leads Levinas, like Sartre, to adopt a broader notion of intentionality than is found in Husserl. Hence, for example, he posits the pre-conceptual intentionality of sensible enjoyment that I discussed earlier. Levinas goes so far as to claim that such alternate non-objectifying forms of intentionality are paradigmatic of phenomenology ("Reflections on Phenomenological Technique" 101). For Levinas, the intentionality of objective consciousness points beyond itself, demanding to be grounded both in other forms of intentionality as well as in pre-intentional "horizons" that lead us back to ontology:

[I]ntentionality bears within itself the innumerable horizons of its implications and thinks of infinitely more 'things' than of the object upon which it is fixed. To affirm intentionality is to perceive thought as tied to the implicit, into which it does not accidentally fall, but in which it maintains itself by essence. ("The Ruin of Representation" 116)

The "implicit" here is Levinas' term for the horizons that our ordinarily conceptual apprehension of an object both presupposes and implies. The search for these horizons, he goes on, results in "a new ontology" wherein "being is posited not only as correlative to a thought, but as already founding the very thought that nonetheless constitutes it" (*Ibid.*). Hence the ontological descriptions that saturate Levinas' early work do not mark a
rejection of phenomenology, but rather an attempt to achieve its primary aim by turning towards the ultimate conditions of conscious life, the structures of Being itself.³⁰

Neither, according to Levinas, is this return to ontology a rejection of the Husserlian reduction to consciousness, but rather a new way of applying it that continues in the tradition of phenomenology's reinterpretation and rehabilitation of the "transcendental" project. The "novelty of phenomenology", claims Levinas, is the discovery, within objectifying experience, of the sources of signification that constitute that experience ("Intentionality and Sensation" 150). "In Husserlian language", he asserts,

this turning around is called the Transcendental Reduction. The contemporaries who do not accomplish this according to the rules of the art defined by Husserl nonetheless place themselves on this ground. For them, experience is the source of significations. It is illuminating before being probative. (Ibid.)

The sense in which Levinas takes himself to be participating in Husserl's "transcendental" approach is clarified elsewhere in his essays; the project of "turning around" is, for Levinas, a turning from the constituted objects of experience towards the "prepredicative 'world'" in which their constitution occurs and, more importantly, the ways in which that constitution gives rise to the very consciousness in which it occurs (Cf. "The Ruin of

³⁰ Cf. Richard Cohen's "Levinas, Rosenzweig, and the Phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger". In this piece, Cohen claims that Totality and Infinity owes to phenomenology three particular aspects of its approach, including "the recognition that the formal structures of representation 'live from' and are 'endowed' with significance by horizons unsuspected by intentional thought" (175). As Cohen explains, this position represents a combination and modification of both Husserl and Heidegger. On Cohen's account, the two other elements that Levinas draws from phenomenology are "(1) the turn to the concrete and (2) the break-up of the formal structures of representation" (Ibid.). All three elements together point towards what I describe here as the transcendental orientation of phenomenology, or the endeavor to show how life always in some way overflows and hence conditions intentional consciousness.
The "reduction" is admittedly no longer performed according to Husserlian "rules", presumably because the being of the object is not put out of play nor the immanent sphere of consciousness presumed absolute (119). Rather, Levinas proposes to interpret the reduction as "the opening of [the] play of intentionality, by the renunciation of the fixed object that is the simple result and the dissimulation of this play" (Ibid.).

As I have already suggested, Levinas argues that this inquiry into the play of intentionality points beyond intentional consciousness itself and its constitution of ontological significations, towards the 'metaphysical' relation that is the ultimate transcendental condition of all 'ontology'.

In later chapters I will explore in greater detail the way in which metaphysics 'intersects' ontology; for now, however, what is important to see is that Levinas' transcendental philosophy is akin to Husserl's insofar as each breaks open or breaks with ordinary intentional consciousness in order to discover the pre-ontological horizons of concrete, lived experience. That these horizons remain largely conceptual for Husserl should not prevent us from seeing the parallel between his transcendental goal and that of Levinas.

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31 That Husserl explicitly undertook to provide a "theory of prepredicative experience" in Experience and Judgment can only further legitimize Levinas' phenomenological pedigree. To be sure, for Husserl it is "the self-evidence of individual objects" that makes up prepredicative experience, while for Levinas this experience just is the relation with the absolute Other. Just the same, Levinas follows rather than deviates from Husserl in postulating that a "pre-predicative givenness" is both possible and necessary as the basis of predicative experience (Experience and Judgment §6).

32 Theodore de Boer points out that this metaphysical relation is not a traditional sort of transcendental condition since it "is not a necessary ontological structure that can be reconstructed from the empirical phenomena" (De Boer 108). Rather, he explains, it is "an unrecoverable contingent or ontic incidence that intersects the ontological order" (Ibid.).
As early as *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Levinas interprets the reduction as a reflection on conscious life that allows us "to grasp our life, and the world in our life, such as they are prior to reflection" (136). What conscious life turns out to be is not merely a structure of essences, but rather "an intention directed at being", or as he puts it some thirty years later, a "play of intentionality" (147). Here we can note another parallel between Sartre and Levinas. For both, phenomenological reflection reveals that conscious life appears as an *activity or play* of intentionality in the world. Hence, as we have already seen, Sartre emphasizes that man's basic relation with being is constituted by his ability to modify it, which relation he calls freedom (*BN* 59-60). The distancing from the world that freedom presupposes, which Sartre later emphasizes is also the re-creation of the world and one's situation in it, is achieved as "a kind of behavior" (61). The point here is not that consciousness takes up or initiates free activity, but rather that, as intentional, it just is a dynamic relatedness to static being-in-itself. Thus Sartre uses the notion of intentionality *in order to come to grips with the passivity and spontaneity of consciousness*. Being-for-itself is dependent on being-in-itself for its being since it is nothing but 'consciousness of' the in-itself, but this dependence appears as being-for-itself's free, spontaneous modification of being-in-itself. Levinas, meanwhile, uses intentionality for the same end. For him, as for Sartre, the spontaneity of consciousness is guaranteed by the fact that intentionality is directed at transcendent existents and constitutes them:

> Intentionality contributes the new idea of a going out from the self, a primordial event conditioning all others, and not capable of being interpreted by some deeper but internal self-consciousness ("Intentionality and Sensation" 135).
This 'going out' of consciousness, however, does not just signify the spontaneity of consciousness, nor does the fact that this 'going out' conditions all worldly events mean that it serves as their absolute foundation. On the contrary, the passivity of intentional consciousness is guaranteed both by the omnipresent weight of pure being from which it arises and by its sensibility, which constitutes a pre-objectifying intentionality wherein thought comes into contact with this pure being and is overwhelmed by it. The fact that both Sartre and Levinas utilize intentionality in order to articulate the mutual spontaneity and passivity of conscious experience is, perhaps, the most 'phenomenological' aspect of their approaches. Herein they join Husserl in his endeavor to resolve a Kantian problematic without falling into psychologism. They furthermore attempt to ground Husserl's project better by suggesting that a modified account of intentionality can resolve his idealist, intellectualist tendencies and also provide the mysteriously lacking 'motivation' for the epoché, which now becomes a reflection that can take place within ordinary experience and which is provoked by the phenomena through which man becomes aware of his relation with being.

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33 As we will see, Levinas claims that in the encounter with the Other consciousness is absolutely overwhelmed and absolutely passive. This is precisely why intentionality, which signifies both spontaneity and passivity, is no longer an adequate model for the intersubjective encounter.
CHAPTER 2:

SARTRE'S AND LEVINAS' PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY II: THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER

For both Sartre and Levinas, solitary consciousness is transformed radically when it encounters another person. For each, an encounter with "the Other" challenges my fundamental ontological situation by re-constituting the world and my own self from a perspective that is not only different from mine, but which is in principle beyond my experience. On Sartre's account, the transcendent consciousness of the Other occasions a restructuring that brings about a new type of being, being-for-others, which turns out to be part of the ontology of being-for-itself. Meanwhile, according to Levinas, this transcendence ruptures the worldly experience of the solitary self and transforms that self into a "hostage" whose world is radically dependent on meanings established by the Other and demands he makes. For both Sartre and Levinas, the primordial encounter between myself and an Other is not an intentional experience that yields conceptual knowledge of the Other; rather, I first experience the Other when he transforms me and my experience by appearing prior to my intentional awareness of him. In this chapter, I will discuss the encounter with the Other as Sartre and Levinas each describes it, with an eye towards illuminating the modes in which the Other becomes present to me in spite of and because of his transcendence. I will also discuss the effects that the Other has on the primordial ontological structures of the self discussed in Chapter 1 and explain in what
sense the Other is prior to these structures. Like the accounts of fundamental human experience I summarized in Chapter 1, Sartre's and Levinas' accounts of the transformations effected by the encounter with the Other are the basis upon which we must understand their ethics. As I will show in Chapters 3 and 4, Sartre imagines the ethical life as a conversion of the self that marks a move away from the objectifying look of the Other I experience in my first encounter with him while, for Levinas, ethics is a realization of the primordial manifestation of the Other's face. In this chapter I will describe the Sartrean look, the Levinasian face, and the foundational encounters with an Other that these represent.

2.1 Sartre on the Other

2.1.1 The look, being-for-others, and the internal negation

At the heart of Sartre's account of intersubjective experience are his well-known analyses of the "look" of the Other in the third part of *Being and Nothingness*. According to Sartre, the Other's look disputes the presumed sufficiency of my pre-reflective self-awareness and reflective self-apprehension by challenging both my own understanding of what I am and collapsing the delicate structure of transcendence-facticity that characterizes being-for-itself. In looking at me, the Other apprehends me as an animate but fixed reference point in his world; for him, I am an object with a determinate nature, a being that is not characterized by an infinity of possibilities but which is what it is:

When I am alone, I can not realize my 'being-seated'; at most it can be said that I simultaneously both am it and am not it. But in order for me to be what I am, it suffices merely that the Other look at me. It is not myself, to be sure; I myself
shall never succeed at realizing this being-seated which I grasp in the Other's look. I shall remain forever a consciousness. But it is for the Other . . . For the Other I am seated as this inkwell is on the table; for the Other, I am leaning over the keyhole as this tree is bent by the wind. Thus for the Other I have been stripped of my transcendence. (BN 351-2)

In short, continues Sartre, the Other's look -- i.e., his conscious apprehension of me -- confers on me a nature and fixes my situation in such a way that my possibilities are transformed into probabilities, future events that may or may not unfold but which are not understood as stemming from my free being (354-5). Moreover, the possibilities that formerly constituted the objects of my world are themselves appropriated by the Other, whose apprehension re-orders worldly objects according to his own projects. This re-ordering is given by the Other's engagement with the world and "unfolds a spatiality which is not my spatiality; for instead of a grouping toward me of the objects, there is now an orientation which flees from me" (342). Because the Other's look transforms the world in this way, I always apprehend him as a decentralizing force amidst the objects of my world: "Thus the appearance among the objects of my universe of an element of disintegration in that universe is what I mean by the appearance of a man in my universe" (343).

Insofar as the Other appears as an 'element of disintegration' in my world, Sartre claims that he is given as "an object for me" (Ibid.). Note, however, it is only because I understand the Other to be a conscious subject that I can grasp his decentralization of my world; thus the Other must be given in some way as subject even in this apprehension of him as an object. In fact, according to Sartre my encounter with the Other is rooted in my experience of his subjectivity, and it is as a subject that the Other confronts me in the look. Hence, Sartre writes, my apprehension of the Other as an object in the world (e.g.,
as a man, soldier, cousin, etc.) "refers to my permanent possibility of being-seen by him; that is, to the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me" (345). This insistence that the Other's independent subjectivity confronts me at the root of intersubjective experience marks for Sartre an important distinction between his account and that of Husserl, who mistakenly claimed that we know the Other as a unique sort of intentional object through our analogical constitution of his consciousness as one like our own (Cf. 315-318). Against this account, Sartre claims that "[w]e encounter the Other, we do not constitute him" (336). Sartre also asserts, contra Heidegger, that the Other is not an ontological necessity whose being conditions my own experience but rather a consciousness that I encounter in the world. In the look the Other's existence confronts us "by means of a direct apprehension which leaves to the encounter its character as facticity" (337). Thus we encounter the Other as a transcendent consciousness that challenges our own and which is given not as a condition of our experience but rather as an absolutely certain fact (337). This fact of the Other grounds a new ontological level that Sartre calls being-for-others.

According to Sartre, the Other and the ontological changes he imposes are given in certain paradigm experiences, such as one's experience of shame.¹ Shame, Sartre claims, is a special mode of non-positional self-consciousness (301). This non-positional consciousness is, of course, available to reflection, and when we reflect on our own

¹ In fact, the experience of shame is a privileged example in Being and Nothingness and Sartre uses it at the very beginning of Part 3 of Being and Nothingness to introduce his discussion of intersubjective experience and the fundamental role played by the look (Cf. 301-3). Much later, fear and pride are introduced as experiences that further illuminate our basic experience of the Other's subjectivity (Cf. 383ff.). Notably, in Being and Nothingness Sartre's examples of experiences in which we encounter the look of the Other all have a 'negative' affective character; it is not until later works that Sartre opens the door for intersubjective encounters that are rooted in a 'positive' experience of the Other.
shame we realize that this sort of consciousness is an intentional apprehension, the object of which is myself. As an intentional self-apprehension, shame "realizes an intimate relation of myself to myself", yet this relation within myself is not sufficient to account for the experience (301-2). Shame, after all, is not itself the result of reflection; I do not make myself ashamed simply by thinking about myself or my actions. Rather, shame is provoked by the presence of another person whose awareness of me constitutes me and my actions in the mode of the in-itself and thereby makes it possible for me to reflect on "what I am" (Ibid.). Sartre's point here is that shame "is shame of oneself before the Other", such that what appears to be 'my' experience of shame is in fact a complicated structure that requires the Other's apprehension of me and my own reflective self-consciousness in light of that apprehension (303). Shame thus turns out to be the "recognition . . . that I am as the Other sees me" (302). That we do experience such a structure of experience constitutes the fact that an Other sees us, and that this look transforms our own self-consciousness.

The Other's apprehension of me -- i.e., the object that he takes me to be, and which I reflectively take myself to be -- has a unique status in relation to my solitary being-for-itself. Because this apprehension is the Other's but is also grasped by me, it is in some sense both mine and not mine. It is not mine insofar as it does not originate from my own free being, but it is also mine because I recognize myself in this object that the Other takes me to be. As Sartre puts it, the being that the look of Other confers on me "is my being without being-for-me" (301). This "new type of being", he writes, can support new qualifications. This being was not in me potentially before the appearance of the Other, for it could not have found any place in the For-itself . . . But this new being which appears for the Other does not reside in the Other; I am
responsible for it as is shown very well by the education system which consists in making children ashamed of what they are. (303)

Just as shame is a relation of myself to myself before the Other, so the type of being indicated by this experience is an ontological structure of my self that arises only insofar as I encounter Others. Hence Sartre calls it my being-for-others. It is important here to notice that my being-for-others is, according to Sartre, genuinely a structure of my being. The fact of the Other's conscious apprehension 'brings about' a radical alteration to my being-for-itself, which is thereafter inseparable from my being-for-others:

Thus my being-for-others -- i.e., my Me-as-object -- is not an image cut off from me and growing in a strange consciousness. It is a perfectly real being, my being as the condition of my selfness confronting the Other and of the Other's selfness confronting me. (380)

Thus intersubjective experience turns out to be a structure of my being. Without this structure, being-for-itself cannot account for certain experiences, such as shame, in which I recognize myself as an object, or as having an "outside" in the world (Ibid.). Being-for-others, so goes Sartre's argument, is necessary to account fully for the type of existence we have in the world.

If, however, being-for-others is necessary to account for our way of being in the world, this does not mean that being-for-others arises because of a real, empirical encounter. For Sartre the transformative encounter that constitutes the 'look' of the Other is an ontological structure, not an ontic reality or a lived worldly event. The look is an

2 It should be noted, however, that the lived experiences Sartre sometimes uses to explain the look are certainly meant as empirical encounters. Consider, for example, Sartre's first person description of an individual who is caught in the act of peeping through a keyhole (347ff.). Here Sartre provides an example of a real encounter and then moves on to describe the same event from an ontological perspective, in terms
always-present experience of the Other, an encounter that has always already 'happened' insofar as I discover within my being-for-itself the ontological structure of being-for-others. The existence of the Other, however, is not an ontological necessity, but rather what Sartre calls a "contingent necessity", which means that its necessity stems from the way our being is given in particular experiences; I will return to this idea shortly.

According to Sartre, the ontological structure of being-for-others within, or in relation to being-for-itself is an "internal negation"; that is, I discover this structure "as a negation which posits the original distinction between the Other and myself as being such that it determines me by means of the Other and determines the Other by means of me" (315). Sartre introduces the idea of an internal negation by contrasting it with the "external negation" that he asserts constitutes the relation between the self and the Other according to both idealists and realists (312-3). To posit that the distinction between self and Other is an external negation is, Sartre claims, to suggest that the difference between myself and the Other is itself given as such. According to Sartre, when someone who holds this picture says that the Other is not me and I am not the Other, he implicitly suggests that "[t]his not indicates a nothingness as a given element of separation between the Other and myself" (312). This nothingness might be given as the physical distance of the modifications to one's being brought about by one's reflective apprehension of the Other's look. The empirical example allows us imaginatively to re-live the experience of shame, and therein to appreciate the alterations enacted by the appearance of an Other. On Sartre's account, however, these alterations have already 'taken place' in us regardless of whether we have ever actually been seen peeping through a keyhole. What the empirical description of shame shows is that we do experience ourselves as having the sort of 'outside' that might be thus seen; we understand the shock of the moment in which the individual is seen precisely because we are the sort of being that is both free for-itself and transcended for-others. Hence Katherine Morris asserts that Sartre "is using 'shame' in two senses: one empirical, where it refers to the unpleasant awareness of oneself as an object which arouses distaste in another; and one ontological, where it simply means the awareness of oneself as an object for another" (Morris 132). When we engage with Others, we are always 'ontologically ashamed' regardless of whether we are empirically so (Ibid.).
between persons, or as some sort of 'ideal' distance, such as the difference between one person's conscious representation of the world and another's (313). Such a picture, Sartre claims, "separate[s] the Other from myself as one substance from another substance", with the result that "all apprehension of the Other is by definition impossible" (339).

In insisting on an internal rather than an external negation, Sartre rejects the reduction of the difference between persons to a distance that would be given as a third term. Instead, he asserts that this difference is in fact "a synthetic, active connection of two terms, each of which constitutes itself by denying that it is the other" (Ibid.). The idea here is that the difference between self and Other actually constitutes each one's being:

If in general there is an Other, it is necessary above all that I be the one who is not the Other, and it is in this very negation effected by me upon myself that I make myself be and that the Other arises as Other. (377)

It is important to notice that for Sartre the internal negation, or distance between self and Other, is effected by the For-itself. In order for this to occur, "consciousness must freely disengage itself from the Other and wrench itself away by choosing itself as a nothingness which is simply Other than the Other and thereby must be reunited in 'itself'' (378). Again, Sartre writes, "[t]he not-being-the-Other is never given but perpetually chosen in a perpetual resurrection" (Ibid.). What it means for one freely to choose one's difference from another person is not fully clear, in part because Sartre never mentions whether and how a free being-for-itself could choose itself otherwise -- i.e., how one could choose to be the same as the Other. The ontological importance of this choice, however, is apparent: the internal negation effects nothing less than the making of myself and the Other what each one is. Hence Sartre calls it "a unitary bond of being", and
asserts that the independence of consciousness from the Other in fact requires that the
Other "penetrate consciousness completely" (Ibid.). Thus despite the seemingly empirical
character of the look that grounds intersubjective experience for Sartre, the relation with
the Other is in fact a deep ontological structure, "a spontaneous and prenumerical
negation" whereby the Other "exists for consciousness only as a refused self" (379).

Important consequences follow from Sartre's account of the internal negation that
structures intersubjective experience. First, because this ontological relationship with the
Other is established pre-empirically, the 'experience' of the look, wherein I am struck by
the Other's presence and thereby altered in my being, is in fact independent of any actual
empirical look (Cf. 368-9). Secondly, because Sartre claims that the internal negation
determines both my being and that of the Other, there is a reciprocity at the ontological
heart of intersubjective experience (378). Note that Sartre argues for the reciprocity of the
internal negation by distinguishing this relation from the external negation whereby he
asserts consciousness distinguishes itself from the world. When consciousness
distinguishes itself from objects in the world, it differs from each object

not only by its own individuality but also in its mode of being. It was For-itself
confronting In-itself. In the upsurge of the Other, however, consciousness is in no
way different from the Other so far as its mode of being is concerned. (378-9)

Because the Other's "mode of being" is like mine, I find that I am only distinguished from
him on the condition that both he and I assert that we are not each other:

The Other exists for consciousness only as a refused self. But precisely because
the Other is a self, he can himself be refused for and through me only in so far as
it is his self which refuses me. (379)
Thus an ontological parity between my mode of being and that of the Other is realized in
our encounter as the reciprocity whereby we each define ourselves negatively as not
being the Other. The order of Sartre's reasoning here is malleable, in the sense that it is
not entirely clear whether the reciprocity is grounded in the ontological parity or vice
versa. One might say that it is because we are like one another that we distinguish
ourselves from one another in an internal negation, or that we are alike because we are
both the type of being that makes itself by differentiating ourself in this way. Far from
indicating a flaw, however, this flexibility in Sartre's discussion reflects his contention
that the internal negation is both a deep ontological link between self and Other, and also
the structure whereby each distinguishes itself from the other.

Sartre introduces the term "detotalized totality" to describe the way that a plurality
of Others appears. By this he means to point out that I am in a relation of internal
negation with each Other, such that Others as such are not encountered as a lump sum but
as an assembly of sorts, wherein each retains his individual and reciprocal relation with
my being. As Sartre puts it:

This means first of all that the multiplicity of 'Others' will not be a collection but a
totality (in this sense we admit that Hegel is right) since each Other finds his
being in the Other. It also means that this Totality is such that it is on principle
impossible for us to adopt 'the point of view of the whole.' (339)

In rejecting 'the point of view of the whole', Sartre rejects the idea that we could unite all
Others under a common concept, such as that of 'consciousness'. Hence the totality of
Others is 'detotalized', because 'no totalitarian and unifying synthesis of 'Others' is
possible" (Ibid.). Our ability to engage with other persons who make up a community
might seem to be a counterexample to this claim. For example, surely when we
participate in an election with our fellow members of a democracy we correctly imagine those members as a group of subjects -- as "the voters", or the voting public. We even in some sense are in a relation of internal negation with this community as such, defining our own political preferences alongside or against "the will of the people". Whether and how we engage with Others in a community, however, is not a question Sartre takes up on the ontological level -- i.e., in terms of the internal negation. As we shall see, Sartre does address the topic when he discusses concrete relations with Others in Being and Nothingness, although it is not until later works that he admits the possibility of our joining with Others in common action.

A final important consequence of the internal negation that links the self and the Other by defining the being of each is the immediate certainty that I have regarding the Other. For Sartre, the Other is not constituted from profiles or bits of my experience. Rather, because my apprehension of him is at the same time a stage of my own self-constitution, his being is immediately present to me:

The Other does not appear to me as a being who is constituted first so as to encounter me later; he appears as a being who arises in an original relation of being with me and whose indubitability and factual necessity are those of my own consciousness (367).

According to Sartre, this factual necessity is not knowledge; I do not come to know that the Other exists. Instead, it is realized as the "uneasiness" of the look wherein I experience "a lived wrenching away from the ecstatic unity of the for-itself" (Ibid.). Again contrasting his account with his phenomenological predecessors, Sartre insists that certainty regarding the Other can be attained only if my own being is called into question by my encounter with him (338). Because this certainty regarding the Other is not a point
of demonstration but rather stems from my apprehension of my own being, Sartre compares it to the *cogito* and suggests that the certainty of one's own existence attained in the look is in fact the same sort of certainty as that attained in the *cogito*. As Katherine Morris points out, this does not mean that the existence of others can be derived from the Cartesian *cogito* (Morris 133). Rather, Sartre's 'second *cogito*' regarding the Other is, as he says, a "factual" or "contingent" necessity (AKA "conditional necessity"), which means its necessity stems from the way our being is in fact given in particular experiences. As Morris explains,

> Neither my own existence nor the existence of the Other is a logical or metaphysical necessity; these are what Sartre refers to as 'factual necessities': *given* the fact that I think, it is necessary that I exist; *given* the fact that I feel shame, it is necessary that others exist. (*Ibid.*)

Hence, when I am being looked at, I have an undeniable certainty of the Other's existence that occurs alongside my certain apprehension of my own being. Sartre can make such a striking claim because, on his account, the internal negation wherein the Other is given just is a relation that defines my being. He also refers to my certain awareness of the Other as a "'pre-ontological' comprehension" since it occurs as part of the foundational apprehension of being that makes ontology possible (*BN* 338). In order to grasp the sense in which my certainty of the Other grounds ontology, it is helpful to recall that in the look the Other destabilizes and reorders both objects in the world and my relation to them. This power of the Other to alter the orientation of the world and the structure of my projects is a sign of the Other's 'priority' over fundamental ontology -- a point to which I will return later in this chapter.
Sartre's insistence that the subjectivity of the Other is given as a transformative limit that objectifies my own being raises important questions regarding the transcendence and accessibility of the Other on Sartre's account. Frederick Elliston, for example, questions whether Sartre's picture is capable of allowing true intersubjectivity -- i.e., a subject-subject relation -- because

the subjectivity of the other is experienced in terms of my own objectivity; when the other enters my field of action, my world becomes a world at his disposal; and when he looks at me I am reduced to an object under his dominion. (Elliston 162-163)

Thus in the look I experience what Sartre calls the "Other-as-subject", but this experience doesn't seem to allow for a relation between two subjects since whenever the Other is encountered as a subject, I myself am reduced to an object. Furthermore, the encounter does not permit me to experience an integrated Other-as-subject and Other-as-object -- that is, an individual whose subjectivity could bear the objective characteristics by means of which I, as subject, previously apprehended him.  

In fact, [the look] reveals to me only the Other-as-subject, a transcending presence to the world and the real condition of my being-as-object. In every causal state, therefore, it is impossible to transfer my certainty of the Other-as-subject to the Other-as-object which was the occasion of that certainty. (BN 368)

In sum, Sartre claims that what is given in the look is "a primary relation between my consciousness and the Other's", not a relation between two subjects (341). Again, writes

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3 Again, this is why Sartre can claim that the look does not depend on any actual empirical encounter. Such an encounter would involve my perception of the Other's body situated in a world of objects -- i.e., an experience of the Other-as-object. The look, however, is an encounter with the Other-as-subject; hence "the act of being-looked-at, in its pure form, is not bound to the Other's body" (BN 369).
Sartre, "The Other is first the being for whom I am an object"; he himself is a "pure subject which by definition I am unable to know -- i.e., to posit as object" (361).

This means that the reciprocity that characterizes the internal negation, the formal ontological link between my consciousness and that of the Other, does not characterize the way in which the Other is actually given to me. Rather, when an Other is encountered, it is as an absolute "transcendence" by a self that is thereby transformed into an object:

The Other is present to me without any intermediary as a transcendence which is not mine. But this presence is not reciprocal . . . An omnipresent and inapprehensible transcendence, posited upon me without intermediary as I am my being-unrevealed, a transcendence separated from me by the infinity of being, as I am plunged by this look into the heart of a world complete with its distances and its instruments -- such is the Other's look when first I experience it as a look. (Ibid.)

For the Sartre of Being and Nothingness, the transcendence of the Other signifies the re-ordering effected by his look and the ontological difference between his world and the world as ordered by me. One understands what the Other's existence means only by understanding the manner in which it ruptures and challenges my solitary but situated being-for-itself; hence "we must ask absolute immanence to throw us into absolute transcendence" (338). Reciprocal only in the sense that both I and the Other are constituted as not being one another, the 'intersubjective' encounter initiated by the look in fact suppresses either my own subjectivity or that of the Other, such that this encounter always yields a relation between subject and object.

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre adopts the position that true familiarity with an Other would be possible only on the hypothesis that I constitute that Other. But such a
possibility could never be realized because of the transcendent freedom of the Other.

Hence,

Human-reality remains alone because the Other's existence has the nature of a contingent and irreducible fact. We *encounter* the Other; we do not constitute him. (336)

To insist that the Other is *encountered* is to insist that the Other is outside my consciousness, that he challenges my subjective constitution of the world. Further, according to Sartre this means that I remain "alone" even amidst the presence of the Other. Despite the internal negation that binds together the determination of our being, *as lived* the distance between the Other's free constitution of the world and my own cannot be bridged.

2.1.2 Concrete relations and the possibility of conversion

Sartre vividly portrays the isolation that characterizes the lived experience although not the basic ontological structure of intersubjective relations in the infamous chapter of *Being and Nothingness* entitled "Concrete Relations with Others". In this chapter, Sartre describes in detail two basic "attitudes" that I can assume with respect to the Other, each of which is a response to the objectification of my being that occurs when the Other looks at me. We have already seen that the Other's look threatens to transform me into being-in-itself by comprehending me as a being with fixed characteristics. Here Sartre points out that one of these fixed characteristics is my freedom itself:

For the Other I am irremediably what I am, and my very freedom is a given characteristic of by being. Thus the in-itself recaptures me at the threshold of the future and fixes me wholly in my very flight, which becomes a flight foreseen and contemplated, a *given* flight. (473)
The look of the Other transforms my 'free' choices into determined events by comprehending them as given elements of my being, itself understood as being-in-itself. This 'alienation' of my freedom adds a second level to the objectification effected by the look: firstly, I am an object for the Other, and secondly, my capacity to transcend that objectification -- i.e., my freedom -- has also become a fixed object. The objectification of my freedom is "an alienation which I can neither transcend nor know", since I do not see myself as the object the Other makes of me (Ibid.). Nevertheless, this objectification triggers in me one of two concrete responses, both of which are attempts to reappropriate and reassert my freedom in the face of the challenge posed by the look. According to Sartre, these responses are "the origin" of my concrete relations with Others, such that these concrete relations "are wholly governed by my attitudes with respect to the object which I am for the Other" (Ibid.).

On Sartre's account, each of the two attitudes that I can adopt towards the Other initiates a struggle with him for control of my alienated freedom. In the first attitude, I "transcend the Other's transcendence" by denying that I am the object his look makes me (Ibid.). Alternately, in the second, I admit the Other's freedom as the foundation of my own being, identify myself with that freedom, and thereby attempt "to incorporate that transcendence within me without removing from it its character as transcendence" (473-474). According to Sartre, these two attitudes are the opposite of one another, since in the first I deny the Other's freedom while in the second I admit it in order to appropriate it. Neither, however, allows me successfully to regain my own freedom because neither enables me to confront the true threat of the Other's look and remain the absolute foundation of my own self-realization. Whichever attitude I adopt, I invariably find that it
fails, at which point Sartre claims I am forced to attempt the other, which also fails; thrown back to the first and back again, I find that I am never able to regain my freedom. On this account I am never able to maintain a stable concrete relation with the Other. More importantly, I am in constant conflict with the Other, since my relations with him are always governed by my efforts to overcome the threat he poses to my freedom. Hence in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre goes so far as to claim, "Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others" (475).

It should be noted that Sartre refers to this conflict and the two attitudes that support it as reciprocal relations. Initially this might seem puzzling, since these concrete attitudes of conflict depend on the fundamental non-reciprocity of subjects experienced in the look -- i.e., the play wherein the Other and I are never simultaneously given as subjects. In fact there is no contradiction here. The reciprocity of conflict does not indicate that two subjects genuinely encounter one another. Rather, the concrete attitudes that Sartre outlines are 'reciprocal' in the sense that both I and the Other are forced to adopt them vis-à-vis one another:

While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. We are by no means dealing with unilateral relations with an object-in-itself, but with reciprocal and moving relations (475).

What is reciprocal here is the attempt to objectify one another, which both I and the Other undertake in response to the threat posed by our conscious apprehension of each other. This reciprocity of concrete attitudes, however, is a result of the non-reciprocity of subjectivities that Sartre posits. That is, because I am immediately objectified by the
Other-as-subject, and vice-versa, we each respond by attempting to defend our own subjectivity and are thereby drawn into conflict.

In the first two sections of his chapter on concrete relations Sartre describes some general types of interpersonal relationship wherein the two fundamental attitudes towards Others are realized. Here love, language, and masochism are held up as exemplars of the attitude whereby I attempt to appropriate the Other's freedom, while indifference, hate, and sadism exhibit my attempt to deny the freedom of the Other and reject his objectification of me. In these examples, my relation with the Other never appears concretely as a positive contribution to my being, in the sense of helping me to realize myself more fully. Neither is it a positive contribution to the Other, whose free activity I am perpetually attempting to rein in simply because as an alternate subject he poses a threat to my own free self-definition. In fact, it may seem in Being and Nothingness that the reciprocal internal negation whereby the Other is the foundation of my being simply does not allow for any possibility of healthy, fruitful concrete relations between myself and the Other, since all concrete realizations of our ontological relation put our subjectivities into conflict with one another.

Sartre furthermore introduces and rejects the possibility of action in common with the Other in the last section of the chapter on concrete relations. In large part, the section is a response to Heidegger's account of intersubjectivity, according to which the experience of "being-with-others" -- an ontological communion rather than a factual encounter -- is foundational. Claiming that his "being-for-others precedes and founds the being-with-others", Sartre goes on to assert that we experience two different types of "being-with", only one of which has ontological significance. The first of these, the "Us-
object", is an experience wherein the look of a third person causes me and an Other to experience shame together. According to Sartre, this experience comes about only when I "assume the responsibility for this situation", which means to accept "the internal reciprocity" whereby both I and the Other define one another, ontologically through our limitations of one another's possibilities and concretely through our conflict (541). Doing this I come to accept the objectification of "the Third", whose look unites our conflict into a single project, transforming us into a "they-as-object" (542). The second sort of "being-with" that we experience, the "We-subject", is provoked when "I apprehend myself as interchangeable with any one of my neighbors" and thereby experience myself as "undifferentiated being" (548). Such an experience can easily be triggered in contemporary society, notes Sartre, by the use of a manufactured object. Because such an object is not made to serve my ends in particular but those of "any transcendence whatsoever", using it can cause me to feel that my possibilities, ends, and free action are not 'mine' but rather those of an indeterminate subject, the 'They'. Importantly, Sartre insists that the We-subject is a purely psychological experience, and "in no way corresponds to a real unification of the for-itselfs under consideration" (549). Unlike the experience of the Us-object wherein the look of a Third prompts a new ontological possibility as I and an Other become a common object, the We-subject in no way alters my being nor is it a real ontological relation between myself and Others. Purely psychological, it "remains a simple symbol of the longed-for unity of transcendences" that is in fact never realized by subjectivities that "remain out of reach and radically separated" (Ibid.). Thus, along with his rejection of any common measure between
myself and the Other, Sartre rejects the possibility of any unity of subjectivities that would allow for action in common.

At this point, having seen that Sartre rejects both the possibility of any healthy concrete relations between myself and the Other and the possibility of any common action whereby we might experience a unity of subjects, one might be inclined to despair about the possibilities for Sartrean ethics. If the concrete realization of the ontological relation whereby I and the Other determine one another is always a conflictual relationship, how can I adopt an ethical attitude in response to the being and situation of the Other-as-subject? If any experience of our unity is a mirage, how can we structure our interactions so as to enable one another to develop our individual possibilities and meet our common obligations? It is at this point, however, that we must turn to certain glimmers of hope that Sartre strews about in Being and Nothingness, and to the incomplete outline of positive intersubjective relations presented in Notebooks for an Ethics.

The first way in which Sartre seems to allow a positive role for the Other-as-subject is by suggesting that the perspective of an Other is an important and fruitful addition to the knowledge of myself that can be gleaned through reflection. This suggestion occurs late in Being and Nothingness when Sartre discusses a method that he terms "existential psychoanalysis", which is used "to bring to light, in a strictly objective form, the subjective choice by which each living person makes himself a person; that is,

4 The following discussion of existential psychoanalysis is much indebted to Thomas Anderson, whose work was the first to suggest to me that the positive gloss on the Other's objective knowledge of me found in these passages might have more general implications for Sartre's account of intersubjectivity. Cf. Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity, 36-38.
makes known to himself what he is" (734). In this method one attempts to decipher, from an individual's behavior patterns and concrete attitudes, the fundamental ontological relations that are "expressed" in his behavior and thereby understand the "fundamental project", or ultimate goals, that the person has set for himself.5 Because for Sartre the self is completely determined by its free choices, to grasp these freely chosen ultimate ends is to grasp nothing less than the true being of the conscious subject. Recall that when Sartre first introduces the look of the Other, he claims that the object that the Other makes of me is an alienating representation of myself "radically different from my being-for-myself, and which does not refer to myself at all" (365). Nevertheless, when he introduces the method of existential psychoanalysis, Sartre takes pains to emphasize that this method, like empirical psychoanalysis,

refuse[s] to admit that the subject is in a privileged position to proceed in these inquiries concerning himself. They equally insist on a strictly objective method, using as documentary evidence the data of reflection as well as the testimony of others. (728)

In short, successful existential psychoanalysis requires the perspective of others. This is so, claims Sartre, not because the "data of reflection" are incomplete, but rather because the immediacy with which we ourselves apprehend this data does not allow us the distance necessary to conceptualize it and thereby understand our choice of a fundamental project. To be sure, when I myself reflect on my concrete behavior, I find that I am in possession of "a pre-ontological comprehension of the fundamental project" (729). However, even though I grasp in reflection all my concrete behavior in such a way

5 See Chapter 3 for more on the idea of a "fundamental project".
as to apprehend implicitly my fundamental project, this grasp "is deprived of the means which would ordinarily permit *analysis and conceptualization*" (*Ibid.*). What is required, claims Sartre, is the existential psychoanalyst's "objective attitude" which will enable the reflective subject "to *know* what he already *understands*" (*Ibid.*). Thus the ultimate ends that I have set for myself will be apprehended *from the point of view of the Other*. Consequently the object thus brought into the light will be articulated according to the structures of the transcended-transcendence; that is, its being will be the being-for-others even if the psychoanalyst and the subject of the psychoanalysis are actually the same person. (729-730)

In existential psychoanalysis, my being-for-itself and the fundamental project that defines it are accessible through my being-for-others -- that is, when my concrete behavior is synthesized, conceptualized, and, in short, objectified.

The suggestion here is striking given Sartre's earlier portrait of being-for-others as an alienating ontological level that is realized concretely as conflict. To be sure, Sartre's description of existential psychoanalysis does not completely rehabilitate the relation with the Other. Indeed, he does not even suggest that I require a real Other in order to apprehend the ultimate goals revealed by my behavior, since he implies that it is possible for me, the subject, to adopt the psychoanalytic perspective regarding my own behavior. However, what Sartre does here establish is the possibility that the objectification endemic to the Other's perspective is, in some circumstances, not only non-threatening but also fruitful. Such a possibility clearly suggests that my relations with concrete others, encountered as subjects, might in such circumstances be a positive experience that leads to greater self-understanding. As Thomas Anderson puts it, "contrary to Sartre's
earlier statements, the other's knowledge of me as an object, as well as my own
understanding of this knowledge, cannot be radically incompatible with, or inapplicable
to, my awareness of myself as a subject" (1993, 38). Whereas earlier in *Being and
Nothingness* Sartre is concerned to stress the dissimilarity between my being-for-itself
and my being-for-others, when discussing existential psychoanalysis he suggests that my
being-for-others offers important insight into my being-for-itself.

In *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre more explicitly suggests that the objectifying
look of the Other is not always a threat, but rather can mark a positive addition to my
being-for-itself. He also clarifies the circumstances under which this objectification is
alienating:

Thus through the Other I am enriched in a new dimension of Being: through the
Other I come to exist in the dimension of Being, through the Other I become an
object.

And this is in no way a fall or a threat *in itself*. This comes about only if the Other
refuses to see a freedom in me *too*. But if, on the contrary, he makes me exist as
an existing freedom as well as a *Being/object*, if he makes this autonomous
moment exist and thematizes this contingency that I perpetually surpass, he
enriches the world and me, he *gives a meaning* to my existence *in addition* to the
subjective meaning I myself give it (*NE* 499-500)

Thus Sartre opens the possibility that the objectification effected by the Other's look can
be accompanied by his recognition of me as a free being. When this occurs, the Other's
objective apprehension of me enriches rather than threatens my realization of myself as a
free being-for-itself. These remarks clearly mark a shift away from Sartre's earlier
emphasis on the threat posed by the Other; one is even tempted to think that this
possibility for positive objectification is in evident contradiction with Sartre's earlier
claim that conflict just is the "original meaning" of being-for-others. However, because Sartre does not present this possibility as a reversal of his earlier position and continues to use the terminology of Being and Nothingness, it is more charitable to assume that at the time he was working on the Notebooks he himself understood it as a legitimate extension of his earlier work.

Such an assumption is substantiated by the way Sartre develops the idea of "comprehension" in the Notebooks, an idea he claims was first explained in Being and Nothingness (Cf. NE 276). As Thomas Anderson points out, comprehension is indeed discussed briefly in Being and Nothingness but takes center stage in the Notebooks, where it comes to signify a "sympathetic engagement in the freedom of the Other" (80). According to Sartre, to "comprehend" an Other's freedom is "to recognize the other's freedom concretely", which is "to recognize it in terms of its own ends, along with the difficulties it experiences and its finitude" (NE 283). The notion of comprehension helps explain both how the objectification that is a necessary part of intersubjective experience can enrich each subject's self-understanding and pave the way for constructive, positive concrete relations. When I understand the Other not only as an object but also as a free being -- i.e., when I 'comprehend' rather than 'know' the Other -- I engage my own freedom in the Other's projects. That is to say, I freely allow my own understanding of the world to be re-ordered according to the Other's ends such that the re-organization of objects effected by his look is no longer a jarring challenge to my free pursuits but rather an additional perspective I can freely adopt. Furthermore, Sartre stresses that this re-organization is not merely "contemplative" but actual; that is,
it is not the simple intuition of a system of means organized toward some end. It is *sympathetic*. It is this sympathy we need to describe. Comprehension is an original structure of the perception of an Other. (*NE* 276)

In fact, this sympathy is nothing less than my "active, original intention" of adopting the Other's end (277). This does not mean that I appropriate the Other's end as my own; that would be to transcend it towards my own ends. Rather, Sartre stresses here that to encounter the Other as subject requires that I 'authentically' share in his free activity, not by achieving his ends myself but by "modify[ing] the situation so that the other can do it" (279). What Sartre seems to have in mind are concrete actions that help the Other achieve his goals; hence he writes that my wanting the "concrete freedom" of the Other becomes "the maxim of my action" (280). To adopt such an attitude of active, sympathetic comprehension towards all Others would be to establish an "ethical position" wherein multiple subjects can realize free projects (281). Importantly, this ethical position is not merely an attitude that I can adopt relative to the Other and which could be successfully established regardless of the way he looks at me. Rather, Sartre states that comprehension is both a "gift" and an "appeal" to the Other, which asks him to join me in surpassing the conflict between our free projects, and which is fully realized only when we both want each other's freedom (281-2, 285).

Sartre's suggestion that a positive role for objectification and a reciprocal appreciation of freedoms is possible raises the question of how this 'ethical position' can be reached from the position of conflict described in *Being and Nothingness*. A suggestive footnote that Sartre inserts at the end of his discussion of the two fundamental attitudes that I can adopt towards the Other points the way to his answer. Commenting on
the purportedly endless circle wherein being-for-itself is tossed from one attitude to the other, Sartre notes,

These considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we can not discuss here. (BN 534, footnote)

To be sure, given the account of intersubjectivity found in Being and Nothingness, this mention of a "conversion" that leads to an "ethics of deliverance and salvation" raises more questions that it answers. Yet the footnote is an important signpost on the way to Sartre's unfinished Notebooks for an Ethics, which surely constitutes his attempt to work out this ethics, and wherein the theme of conversion indeed takes a prominent role.

There, Sartre suggests that conversion is a turning away "from every one of the For-itself's attempts to be" -- i.e., from the bad faith endeavor to fix itself as a being-in-itself (NE 472). Meanwhile, it is a turn "to intersubjectivity", or an "ethical" direction (407). It is associated with concretely willing the Other's ends and it generates a "structure of authentic love" wherein I "unveil the Other's being-in-the-world", "rejoice in it without appropriating it", and "give it safety in terms of my freedom" (507-8). Although Sartre's comments in the Notebooks are unpolished and often enigmatic, it is clear that conversion is a shift in my own mode of free self-assertion whereby I am able to encounter the Other-as-subject and enter into relationships with him quite different from the masochistic and sadistic ones that serve as exemplars in Being and Nothingness.

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6 Being-for-itself's "attempts to be" can also be thought of as the attempt to sacrifice one's freedom in pursuit of an absolute value, the effort to be the ultimate foundation of one's being, or the endeavor to be God. These alternate formulations are all ways in which Sartre describes our efforts to flee the weight of our absolute freedom, which is the perpetual instability of being-for-itself. In Chapter 3, I will explain these formulations in greater depth.
How this shift maps onto the ontological structure of intersubjective experience outlined in *Being and Nothingness* is less clear. It may be that once conversion occurs, my encounter with the Other is no longer based in the look of the Other; in this case conversion would entail a wholesale revision of being-for-others according to which this ontological structure no longer corresponds to an alienating re-organization of worldly objects. This robust account of conversion, which I will call the "ontological reading" and according to which conversion enacts a change in the basic structure of being-for-others, may be suggested by Sartre's claim that after conversion the 'alienation' conferred upon objects by the Other's comprehension is lived as generosity, a "means of being" wherein I offer up the meaning of worldly objects and allow them to be re-created through the Other's consciousness (*NE* 129). This generosity does seem to enact a deep alteration in my being, since Sartre claims that "in this act I lose myself as a passion" (*Ibid.*). He also asserts that "it is not just my work that is a gift", but rather my "character", such that "The Me is the unifying rubric of our generosity" (*Ibid.*).

Such remarks, however, are far from conclusive evidence regarding the precise nature of the change brought about by conversion. Indeed, it is quite possible to read conversion in the *Notebooks* as designating not an ontological change in the subject's being-for-others, but rather a difference in the way that mode of being is concretely realized. On such an interpretation, which I will call the "non-ontological reading", conversion would mark an alternate possibility for the concrete relations with Others that follows after the foundational shock of the look. On this reading, the basic ontological structure of being-for-others -- the look and the internal negation that defines me and the Other -- would remain intact, and conversion would be a choice or activity whereby I
break the circle of conflict presented in *Being and Nothingness* by freely recognizing the Other's freedom as such. Generosity would be understood as a new attitude that follows on conversion, an attitude wherein I willingly re-order my own projects so as to help the Other realize his.

This interpretation of conversion as a deep alteration in the way that being-for-others is concretely realized, but not a change in the basic ontological structure of intersubjective relations, is supported by Sartre's association of conversion with nonaccessory (i.e., pure) reflection. In the *Notebooks*, Sartre identifies conversion with the shift to nonaccessory reflection, which is triggered by the failure of accessory (i.e., impure) reflection (470, 472ff). As Sartre explains it, conversion is a shift that consists in rejecting accessory reflection's attempt to realize the self as an in-itself, and in adopting non-accessory reflection's vision of the self as a free being-for-itself. Hence conversion is a shift at the level of conscious projects and not a change in the fundamental ontology of being-for-itself and being-for-others. This move from one type of reflection to another would presumably open the possibility of an ethics of conversion because it allows the subject to transcend the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith, and to grasp his projects both from the 'inside' and the 'outside' without becoming alienated from them (474). Indeed, Sartre had already claimed in *Being and Nothingness* that an explanation of ethics was as yet impossible because he had not yet discussed "the role of purifying reflection" (742). In his *Notebooks*, we see him attempting to define that role by outlining the modifications that this shift to purifying reflection effects (474ff).

This weaker, non-ontological reading of conversion is furthermore supported by the fact that in the *Notebooks* Sartre continues to reject the possibility of an ontological
unity of subjectivities that could support action in common. To be sure, his account of the
We-subject in this later work is different from that found in *Being and Nothingness*. The
*Notebooks* discuss the possibility that the We-subject is not merely a psychological
experience of oneself as an undifferentiated subject, but also a real organization of
individuals "on the anthropological level of some common work" (130). Consonant with
the new possibility that through conversion I can come to share in an Other's projects,
this "anthropological" We-subject is brought about when "I grasp myself as engaged in
the common enterprise and as part of a common organization" (*Ibid.*). In this We-subject,
claims Sartre, "my I gets fixed and gets lost"; he even goes so far as to assert that the We
"has a density of being that allows me to avoid the anxiety of being responsible for my I"
(*Ibid.*). Despite the ontological tone of such claims, however, Sartre continues to maintain
that "the ontological organization of a We" is impossible (*Ibid.*). Hence the apparently
deep alteration that the *Notebooks* 'We-subject' effects is a change in the way that *Being
and Nothingness*' being-for-itself and being-for-others are concretely realized rather than
the establishment of a new, alternate ontological structure. Further, the fact that the We-
subject of common work is made possible by conversion further suggests that conversion
itself marks not a difference in fundamental ontology but in the lived, concrete attitudes
that stem from it.

Regardless of how one interprets the ontological significance of conversion vis-à-
vis the structure of intersubjective relations outlined in *Being and Nothingness*, however,
it is clear from the *Notebooks* that reflection and conversion, like comprehension, are the
key means whereby Sartre begins to piece together his promised ethics of salvation and
deliverance. As we will see in later chapters, these themes indicate that the possibilities
for a concrete Sartrean ethics are not limited by the possibilities for concrete relations that are presented in *Being and Nothingness*. Rather, the ontological structure of intersubjectivity presented in that work is plausibly consistent with a 'positive' ethics wherein the self and the Other recognize one another's freedom and participate in one another's projects in a fruitful, generous manner. This is so despite the foundational alienation wrought by the look and the jarring negation of my being-for-itself that is, at root, my being-for-others.  

2.2 Levinas on the Other

2.2.1 The face, language, passivity, and hypostasis as substitution

In the last chapter, I discussed Levinas' distinctive use of the term "metaphysics" to name the relation with the Other and mentioned his claim that "metaphysics precedes ontology". Let this claim serve as an introduction to Levinas' account of intersubjectivity. For Levinas the Other is, above all, the one who is above all -- that is to say, the one whose presence transcends Being -- and it is in virtue of this transcendence that the Other grounds and transforms the structure of self and world that I outlined in Chapter 1. Like Sartre, Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* describes the arrival of the Other as an interruption.

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7 This reading, it should be noted, is at odds with those who find the possibility of an ethics outlined in the *Notebooks* to be either insincere or unsuccessful precisely because Sartre does not wholly revise the account of intersubjectivity first presented in *Being and Nothingness*. See, e.g., Jean-Louis Chrétien's essay "Une Morale en Suspens". Here Chrétien concludes that Sartre's attempted ethics is a failure both because Sartre's interpretation of the Other's look as a primary curse is never abolished and because the possibility for a conversion to an attitude of authentic love is triggered not by the Other but rather from my own decision to regard the Other's freedom differently. To the contrary, I interpret Sartre's *Notebooks* more charitably, assuming that the conversion he outlines is a real possibility despite its pessimistic ontological foundation.

104
of the way in which I ordinarily experience the world, an interruption that challenges and re-orders that experience. Also like Sartre, the Other according to Levinas cannot, contra Husserl, be intentionally apprehended or represented in any way that would capture his true alterity and instead is primordially manifested with absolute certainty on a pre-ontological level. Unlike Sartre, however, Levinas does not typically present the foundational interruption of the Other's transcendent alterity as a threat but rather as a peaceful encounter. Also unlike Sartre, Levinas posits that one's encounter with an Other and the ontological changes it brings about are immediately ethical; here it seems no conversion to ethics is needed, since the rupture of consciousness by the presence of the Other turns out to be ethics itself. In fact, however, these differences in Sartre's and Levinas' accounts of intersubjectivity turn out to be less important than it may seem at first glance. Ultimately, because each claims that the Other ontologically transforms the self, each is led to posit that ethics, or the fulfillment of the human person and the achievement of right relations with the Other, in fact takes place as an ontological drama through the re-creation of the self by the Other and the challenges he poses.

It is something of a commonplace that in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas describes the Other by focusing on the way in which he interrupts the enjoyment of worldly existence and the freedom of representation, while in *Otherwise than Being* Levinas stresses the primordial passivity of the subject and the way in which the intersubjective encounter conditions selfhood. The difference here is, as Rodolphe Calin puts it, a shift from describing the intersubjective encounter in *Totality and Infinity* as a relation from

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8 Cf., e.g., Wyschogrod 2002, p.190.
me to the Other to describing it in Otherwise than Being as the relation from the Other to me (Calin 197). The two approaches are complementary, but the shift is indicative of Levinas' increasing emphasis on the idea that the structures of one's own selfhood and identity are the site where one truly encounters the Other. This is not to say that Totality and Infinity neglects the way in which the Other alters and grounds my identity. Rather, Levinas' analyses there are best thought of as a different way of describing that same alteration by focusing on the lived world rather than the structure of my being itself. Here I will consider both texts, beginning with Totality and Infinity and using Otherwise than Being to flesh out Levinas' account of the Other.

If Sartre asserts that I encounter the Other in his 'look', Levinas claims that it is the 'face' of the Other that I encounter first. Just as the look is not to be confused with a merely empirical event of another person looking at me, neither is the face reducible to any physical visage. Rather, the face signifies for Levinas the mode in which the Other expresses himself to me, not by means of essential or accidental qualities as though he were a phenomenon, but purely, from himself, "καθ' αὑτό" (TI 51). The use of Aristotelian terminology here emphasizes that Levinas' account is in fact an attack on Aristotelian metaphysics, according to which we can correctly analyze subjects as composites of form and matter. The Other, Levinas tells us "breaks through all the envelopings and generalities of Being to spread out in its 'form' the totality of its 'content', finally abolishing the distinction between form and content" (Ibid.). To understand the Other by means of essence and accident, as a unity of form and matter, would fail to capture his true alterity. By indicating that the Other is beyond such categories, Levinas wants to stress that the Other who appears as face is beyond all our thinking of him, and
hence must reveal himself to us. In fact, the Other is beyond being altogether, if being is that which can be captured and described with ontological or epistemological categories. As a "[m]anifestation καθ' αύτό" , the face is not disclosed, seen, or known; rather, it "consists in a being telling itself to us independently of every position we would have taken in its regard, expressing itself" (65).

In claiming that the face primordially 'expresses itself', Levinas is once again concerned to articulate a mode of experience wherein the full exteriority of an experienced object is maintained. In Chapter 1, we saw that Levinas associates representational consciousness of worldly objects with a reduction of those objects to their intentional correlates. Hence to experience or 'see' an object in this, our most ordinary mode of awareness is, for Levinas, to 'possess' that object, or to reduce its alterity for the purpose of comprehending it. Such representational awareness, however, cannot enable us to encounter a truly other being in all the fullness of its alterity. The face, for Levinas, indicates the Other's way of manifesting himself without falling prey to any representational consciousness whereby we might apprehend him, for example as another person or consciousness, a woman or man, an enemy or a friend: "The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face" (TI 50). This for Levinas is the meaning of the Other's transcendence: that the Other is beyond all possible intentional consciousness of him and therefore inaccessible to me unless he shows himself. In fact, the Other does not merely present himself as exceeding

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9 Cf. Chapter 1, §2.2.
my representational comprehension of him, he also challenges that comprehension and
compels me to encounter him without possessing him:

The Other -- the absolutely other -- paralyzes possession, which he contests by his
epiphany in the face. He can contest my possession only because he approaches
me not from the outside but from above. (171)

Hence the face of the Other represents not only the absolute alterity of the Other, but also
his mastery over me. The Other 'expresses himself' for Levinas because, as transcendent,
he must be the sole source of his own manifestation; the spontaneity of my consciousness
plays no role in his appearance.

Levinas describes the Other's challenge to my conscious 'possession' of objects as
a challenge that takes place against the background of the home and the prior relation
with the domestic, feminine Other. The manifestation of a transcendent Other is a new
event within the home, and occurs only because I "refuse both enjoyment and possession"
and requires that "I must know how to give what I possess" (Ibid.). That the Other
presents himself in the home is important because it means that the primordial encounter
with the transcendent Other, unlike the Other himself, does not transcend my
apprehension of it:

But the transcendence of the face is not enacted outside of the world, as though
the economy by which separation is produced remained beneath a sort of beatific
contemplation of the Other . . . The 'vision' of the face as face is a certain mode of
sojourning in a home -- or, to speak in a less singular fashion -- a certain mode of
economic life. (172)

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10 Cf. Chapter 1, §2.2.
Hence the primordial encounter that occurs when the Other manifests his face, while it should not be confused with the empirical, physical event of two persons meeting, is nevertheless a 'worldly' event insofar as it calls into question my previous relation to objects in the world. As Levinas puts it, this 'face-to-face' relation "is not produced outside of the world, but puts in question the world possessed" (173).

At least one important parallel between Sartre's look and Levinas' face immediately suggests itself: just as for Sartre the Other makes himself my world's center of gravity through his look, so too does the face for Levinas impose a reorientation that forces me to surrender the primacy of my conscious apprehension of the world and its objects. A couple of important differences, however, should be noted. First, whereas for Sartre the look forcibly re-orders objects in the world toward the Other inescapably and against my will, Levinas suggests that the transformation of the world effected by the face is peaceful; it requires but does not force me to open myself to the Other. Because of this, it seems that I can reject and effectively avoid the reorientation effected by the face as I cannot, for Sartre, resist the effects of the look. Hence Levinas writes that the Other's 'appearance' in the home can be met either by "hospitality", which would be "[r]ecollection in a home open to the Other", or by "egoism" (TI 172). In hospitality, I open the doors of my home, allowing my conscious engagement with the world to be disrupted by Other's radically different mode of appearing and the challenges it presents. In egoism, on the Other hand, "the separated being can close itself up", refusing to open itself to the transcendence of the Other (173).

A second difference between Sartre's look and Levinas' face is that for Levinas the reorientation of the world brought about by the face is not merely a shock to my own
self-absorbed way of living but also a new opening to a world in common. For Sartre, the look is that primordial encounter wherein the Other-as-subject robs me of my solitary projects and re-organizes the world according to his. The Other is initially a threat, and it is only through conversion that the primordial encounter becomes an opening through which I, as a subject, can engage with the Other who looks at me. For Levinas, by contrast, the face itself is the Other's self-manifestation, an opening of himself to me that has, as its effect, the result of inviting me into ethical 'conversation' with the Other. The Other not only breaks and re-organizes my solitary, domestic life; he also invites -- or rather, commands -- me to participate in his projects.

Levinas' idea that the reorientation of the world brought about by the face can be the peaceful opening to a common world depends on his claim that this reorientation can be identified with the birth of language. This is so because language is achieved only through an understanding of the world common to both the Other and myself, a "primordial putting in common" which according to Levinas just is the reorientation effected by the face:

The relationship with the Other, transcendence, consists in speaking the world to the Other. But language accomplishes the primordial putting in common -- which refers to possession and presupposes economy . . . The hic et nunc itself issues from possession, in which the thing is grasped, and language, which designates it to the other, is a primordial dispossession, a first donation . . . The relation with the Other does not only stimulate, provoke generalization, does not only supply it with the pretext and the occasion (this no one has ever contested), but is this generalization itself. (TI 173-174)

Note that Levinas distinguishes his account explicitly from the mere claim that language allows for us to experience the world as a common world, or that intersubjective exchange allows for mutual understanding. Rather, if we take him at his word what he
asserts is that intersubjective experience just is language. In this "language", the Other offers to us the meanings that constitute his world, thereby challenging and reorganizing our world; this challenge, as we have already seen, is the manifestation of the face.

The most important effect of the face in Levinas, however, is the challenge it poses to my own identity. Levinas develops this central idea at length in Otherwise than Being, although the claim is already explicit in Totality and Infinity. In the earlier work, Levinas asserts that "[t]he calling in question of the I" is "coextensive with the manifestation of the Other in the face", and goes on to identify this destabilization of the self with language (171). As I have just noted, Levinas claims that language destroys my possession of the world by instituting a common world. Language also calls into question my very self-identity, not merely because of this "putting in common" but rather because of the transcendence of the Other, or, as Levinas puts it, the "height from which language comes" (Ibid.). According to Levinas, the Other provokes generalization and language not merely as another consciousness whose alternate perspective on the world complements mine, but rather as a consciousness 'higher' than mine, whose destabilization of my world trumps my solitary experience. The Other is a "Master"; his "alterity is manifested in a mastery that does not conquer but teaches" (Ibid.). It is because the Other approaches me "from above" that he does not merely enter into relation with me but is also able to call into question my identity (Ibid.).

Levinas uses the concept of infinity to describe this 'height' of the Other. The Other, he writes, "is the presence of infinity breaking the closed circle of totality" (Ibid.). This use of infinity to indicate a transcendent being is explicitly drawn from Descartes. On the Cartesian account, the idea of infinity is that idea which overflows our capacity to
think it; it therefore functions as proof of God's existence because such an idea would require that an infinite being give it to us. Levinas concurs that the idea of infinity overflows our capacity to think it, but concludes not that we are given the idea by an infinite God but rather through a direct encounter with the absolutely other Other:

In returning to the Cartesian notion of infinity, the 'idea of infinity' put in the separated being by the infinite, we retain its positivity, its anteriority to every finite thought and every thought of the finite, its exteriority with regard to the finite; here there was the possibility of separated being. The idea of infinity, the overflowing of finite thought by its content, effectuates the relation of thought with what exceeds its capacity, with what at each moment it learns without suffering shock. This is the situation we call welcome of the face. (TI 197)

This appropriation of the Cartesian idea of infinity allows Levinas to depict the Other both as radically transcendent to 'finite', or intentional, thought and as radically interior to consciousness, for if infinity is an idea that radically overflows my capacity to think it, it is nevertheless my idea. Hence Levinas uses the idea of infinity to stress that the Other reveals himself within my conscious life. While it is the superabundance of this idea that disturbs and re-shapes the world of conscious experience, it is its unanticipated and extraordinary presence within me that disturbs my own identity.

It is in Otherwise than Being that Levinas introduces his fullest account of the way in which the interruption of the face re-defines my identity by re-shaping my being. Here his central idea is that the self when encountering the transcendent Other finds itself absolutely passive; unable to represent or intentionally experience the Other as such, it is forced to abandon the activity of intentional comprehension that ordinarily defines it. Instead, one finds oneself simply "assigned" to the world offered through the Other's language and to a total responsibility for the Other's needs. Here Levinas uses the term
"ego" to name the identity of the separated self of representational consciousness. He describes the encounter with the Other as a "de-posing or de-situating of the ego", or a "reverting of the ego into a self" that possesses no identity except that which is given to it through the relation with the Other. Levinas explicitly links the generous language of the Other to this movement:

Saying is a denuding, of the unqualifiable one, the pure someone, unique and chosen; that is, it is an exposedness to the other where no slipping away is possible… [I]t absolves me of all identity, which would arise again like a curd coagulating for itself, would coincide with itself. This absolution reverses essence. (OB 50)  

Note that Levinas refers to the self-identity of a being not in relation to the Other as a movement "for itself". This suggestively Sartrean language is accentuated by another remark in which Levinas contrasts the passivity of "the for-the-other" with the self-identity of the "for-oneself" (Ibid.). However, while Levinas may be using Sartrean terms to emphasize that the alteration effected by the Other is an alteration in my being -- it "reverses essence", he writes -- we should not for that reason assume that the ontological effect of the Levinasian Other is the same as the Sartrean. While in Sartre the link between self and Other is an 'internal negation' that mutually links and distinguishes my being and that of the Other, in Levinas the relation with the Other does not enact a reciprocal link or differentiation, although the relation does distinguish me as what I am. The 'reversal' or 'denuding' of essence effected by the face is not a negation of essence, but a disinterestedness, an 'otherwise than being' which turns into a 'for the other', burning for the other, consuming the bases of any

11 I will return to Levinas' use of the term "saying" in Chapter 4.
Levinas' etymological play is instructive: the face is "a disinterestedness" [dés-intéressement] because the relation with the other takes the self out of its essence rather than negating it, and effects a new identity on a ground "otherwise than being".

If for Sartre my immediate awareness of the Other is like a 'second cogito', given as a "factual necessity", for Levinas it is as though the Other is given within the certainty of the first cogito. As Levinas develops his account in *Otherwise than Being*, it turns out that the transcendent Other is encountered prior to the hypostasis of the self and triggers that hypostasis by making all signification possible. Hence the I that knows itself as "I" already hides the face of the Other within its self-coincidence. The account is not, however, solipsistic; rather, the radicality of Levinas' claim is precisely that within the conscious ego there is an absolutely exterior element that is nevertheless not an object of knowledge. Here Levinas takes up again his old theme of hypostasis, claiming more explicitly that this eruption of the conscious self from pure being is triggered by the Other and suggesting that the very possibility of being a separated, solitary ego depends on a pre-ontological relation with the Other. This is why the level of experience that Levinas calls enjoyment never actually exists; the solitary self is an abstraction and, as it were, a mythical temptation since even solitary consciousness presupposes an Other who leaves a trace of himself within it. Nevertheless, although Levinas posits the Other as the ultimate ground of the ego or subject, he does not hold that the Other takes the place of the *il y a*, which he now describes as the indefinite extension of essence rumbling beyond the self-identical ego (*OB* 163). While the face of the Other is the source of identity and the literal
raison d'être of the ego, "the horrifying il y a" persists as though it were the ontological matter from which selfhood is formed. As Levinas writes, the il y a remains "behind all finality proper to the thematizing ego, which cannot sink into the essence it thematizes" (Ibid.).

The key to understanding how the Other grounds the identity of the self lies in Levinas' account of the passivity of consciousness and his notion of 'substitution'. This notion is most explicitly developed in a 1967 lecture entitled "Substitution", which Levinas later revised twice. The first set of revisions yielded a published version of the essay in 1968, while the second yielded the fourth chapter of Otherwise than Being, which also bears the title "Substitution". Levinas begins that chapter by describing ordinary intentional consciousness by which we know objects and ourselves as ego-subjects. He then reminds the reader that his philosophical project heretofore has been to uncover a non-intentional level of subjectivity that would be different from this consciousness:

In starting with sensibility interpreted not as a knowing but as proximity, in seeking in language contact and sensibility, behind the circulation of information it becomes, we have endeavored to describe subjectivity as irreducible to consciousness and thematization. (OB 100)

Note that Levinas here uses the term 'proximity' to name the non-intentional subjectivity he endeavors to describe. He then goes on immediately to link this subjectivity to the relation with the Other: "Proximity appears as the relationship with the other, who cannot be resolved into 'images' or be exposed in a theme" (Ibid.). Proximity is thus a term that picks out the relation with the Other, particularly insofar as that relation occurs through some non-intentional mode of consciousness.
Within another paragraph, Levinas quickly mentions three other terms he frequently uses to describe the relation with the Other: 'trace', 'obsession', and 'persecution'. The trace of the Other picks out the way in which the Other appears, namely by disturbing intentional consciousness without being an object of it. That the other is a trace does not mean that the Other who interrupts consciousness points to some further, real Other behind him; the face is not a phenomenon or a sign that merely represents a noumenal Other. On the contrary, the term trace is meant to indicate that the presence of the Other within consciousness has no beginning -- i.e., as Levinas puts it, the Other is "an-archic". Thus the Other qua trace is precisely that exteriority within consciousness that does not point towards a principle other than itself. 'Obsession', meanwhile, picks out the fact that the relationship with the Other is not a result of the subject's spontaneity but rather affects him as a purely passive term:

the subject is affected without the source of the affection becoming a theme of representation. We have called this relationship irreducible to consciousness obsession. The relationship with exteriority is 'prior' to the act that would effect it. (101)

Notice that Levinas carefully places the word 'prior' [antérieure] in quotes, implying that to imagine any ordering between the relationship with the Other and intentional consciousness would already threaten to objectify that relation by placing it within something like a spatiotemporal framework. Later I will discuss the 'priority' of the relationship with the Other in greater detail. For now, however, let me simply note that the 'priority' of obsession means the supreme passivity of consciousness vis-à-vis the self-manifestation of the face. Levinas uses 'persecution' synonymously to pick out this supreme passivity, in contradistinction to the spontaneity of intentional consciousness:
Obsession is persecution: persecution does not here make up the content of a consciousness gone mad; it designates the form in which the ego is affected, a form which is a deflecting from consciousness. This inversion of consciousness is no doubt a passivity -- but it is a passivity beneath all passivity. (101)

If we take Levinas at his word, obsession and persecution just are other names for the relationship with the Other. These terms are nevertheless important for Levinas because they help to emphasize certain aspects of the non-intentional encounter. The passive self is 'obsessed' with the Other because it is drawn to him without the reason or logic that characterize objectifying consciousness. It is also 'persecuted' by the Other because it finds itself in a relationship with the Other that it does not choose and which it experiences as a burden.

In the fourth chapter of Otherwise than Being, Levinas weaves these terms together in order to explain his claim that the hypostasis of intentional consciousness from non-intentional sensibility takes place as a passive 'substitution' wherein the self loses its identity by divesting itself of its freedom and recovers identity as the one who is responsible for the Other. "Subjectivity qua consciousness", Levinas asserts, "is an ontological event", a fundamental episode of being whereby a self-identical "I" that knows itself as engaged in the world arises (99). Both consciousness and self-consciousness are born together in this same event, and Levinas casually conflates the two, calling consciousness a "knowing of oneself by oneself" (102). In fact, the "I" constituted in this event is self-identical because it is self-conscious; it is through positing

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12 At the beginning of this quote I depart from Lingis' translation, which reads: "Obsession is a persecution where the persecution does not make up the content of a consciousness gone mad..." The French is as follows: "L'obsession est pérsecution: la pérsecution ne constitue pas ici le contenu d'une conscience devenue folie" (160)
itself as an entity among entities, by taking position in the world, that 'subjectivity qua consciousness' occurs. According to Levinas, Sartre is among those who presume that all subjectivity is consciousness in this sense. "For Sartre as for Hegel", he writes, "the oneself is posited on the basis of the for-itself" -- i.e., for them the oneself just is the subject defined by its intentional activity of knowing the world (103). According to Levinas, this account of subjectivity as the conscious "I" represents the self as a closed circle, or as a duality of reflecting and reflected-on. A problem with this account, however, is that it needs to presuppose a "oneness without any duality" that enters into the play of self-reflection, a term that would be the "oneself" known in self-consciousness (104). Levinas calls this antecedent oneness the "recurrence" of the oneself (105). It is as pure recurrence prior to reflection that the oneself "is first a non-quiddity, no one, clothed with purely borrowed being" (106). Yet as the term that takes up a position in being and thereby becomes consciousness, "the oneself is exposed as a hypostasis":

The oneself proper to consciousness is then not again a consciousness, but a term in hypostasis. It is by this hypostasis that the person, as an identity unjustifiable by itself and in this sense empirical or contingent, emerges substantively. (106)

Thus, reworking the theme he developed in his early essays and in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas explains that hypostasis, or the event of emerging as substance\(^\text{13}\), is the 'ontological event' of 'subjectivity qua consciousness' to which he alluded at the start of "Substitution".

\(^{13}\) Note here that by using the term "substance" Levinas does not adopt any particular metaphysics but rather wants to stress the self-identity of consciousness.
Key to Levinas' account in *Otherwise than Being* of the oneself, or bare "ipseity", upon which reflective consciousness relies is his claim that it "cannot form itself" but rather is "formed with absolute passivity" (104). Indeed, the oneself presupposed by reflection must be a passive self precisely because through its first movement of spontaneous activity it becomes consciousness. The absolute passivity of the oneself, however, implies that it is "a creature" -- i.e., that hypostasis is triggered from without (105). It is perhaps Levinas' most important and distinctive claim that hypostasis occurs because the self "is bound in a knot that cannot be undone in a responsibility for Others" (*Ibid.*). In short, the hypostasis of the self takes place as persecution:

Persecution is not something added to the subjectivity of the subject and his vulnerability; it is the very movement of recurrence (111).

Hence it is through the relation with the Other that the oneself is formed, created precisely as the being who is 'exposed' to the demands of the Other:

In the exposure to wounds and outrages, in the feeling proper to responsibility, the oneself is provoked as irreplaceable, as devoted to the others, without being able to resign, and thus as incarnated in order to offer itself, to suffer and to give. It is thus one and unique, in passivity from the start, having nothing at its disposal that would enable it to not yield to the provocation. (105)

If we ask how exactly passive exposure to the demands of the Other calls forth the oneself and effects its hypostasis, we echo the question that leads Levinas to develop the idea of "substitution".

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14 As Rodolphe Calin explains, Levinas' portrait of the self as absolutely passive stands in stark contrast to the traditional metaphysical assumption that the subject can be defined according to its powers. See Calin 203ff.
According to Levinas, this passive exposure provokes the self because the self

*just is* the one who is assigned to answer for the Other, in the sense of taking up his needs and becoming responsible for them in his stead. As he puts it, the very identity of the self is accomplished as the "substitution of me for the Others" (114). Substitution, to be clear, "is not an act" but rather is the structure of the "I" that establishes its uniqueness (117). Levinas calls the bare "I" of recurrence created in substitution a "hostage" because its being is evoked by persecution and constituted by its responsibility for Others:

The ipseity, in the passivity without arche characteristic of identity, is a hostage. The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and for everyone. (114)

At times Levinas goes so far as to say that the other "is in me and in the midst of my very identification" such that "[t]he Mind is a multiplicity of individuals" (125-6). The idea that the self is constituted through an encounter as a hostage, condemned to answer for the Other, may seem to echo the negative tone of Sartre's account, according to which the alienation of freedom undergone in the Look forcibly alters the ontology of the self. Here it is important to remember that although Levinas does stress that the face of the Other occurs as an unexpected break in the enjoyment of the self-satisfied ego, it is not properly speaking this jarring rupture that brings about hypostasis but rather the peaceful, pre-intentional relation with the Other that is thereby opened. Hence this event is

not an alienation, because the other in the same is my substitution for the other through responsibility, for which, I am summoned as someone irreplaceable. I exist through the other and for the other, but without this being alienation: I am inspired. (114)

Inspiration, explains Levinas, "means an openness in which being's essence is surpassed" (115). Hence in the relation with the Other on Levinas' account, it is not as though the
Other simply interrupts and robs me of my free being. Rather, the images used indicate a breaking-open and a surpassing of enjoyment and representational consciousness -- i.e., the realm of ontology and being for Levinas -- which in fact reveals that "older than the ego" and "prior to principles" the self is always called to become an ethical self, a being responsible for Others. Although Levinas does not link this structure to reflection nor to a mutual recognition of freedom, his assignation of this 'positive' ontological role to the encounter with the Other recalls Sartre's *Notebooks for an Ethics* much more than *Being and Nothingness*.

By now it should be clear that for Levinas the transcendence of the Other results in an asymmetry in intersubjective relations. Unlike Sartre, Levinas maintains that there is an asymmetry of self and Other both in the encounter with the face and in the ontological structure that the manifestation of the Other effects. In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas describes this asymmetry as "the inevitable orientation of being 'starting from oneself' toward 'the Other'" (215). This orientation is a result of the fact that the I experiences itself as first a separated being for whom the Other and his language issue an invitation to enter an ethical space of shared meanings, a common world. Hence "[b]eing is not first, to afterwards, by breaking up, give place to a diversity all of whose terms would maintain reciprocal relations among themselves"; rather, "[m]ultiplicitly in being . . . takes form as fraternity and discourse" and "is situated in a 'space' essentially asymmetrical" (*Ibid.*).

In *Otherwise than Being*, the asymmetry of intersubjective relations is expressed as the assertion that while I am called to sacrifice my ego in substituting for the Other, I cannot claim that the Other should sacrifice himself for me. To the contrary, "[n]o one
can substitute himself for me, who substitutes himself for all" (126). Levinas consistently condemns any attempt to impose a universalized reciprocity on intersubjective relations: "But to say that the other has to sacrifice himself to the others would be to preach human sacrifice!" (126). To imagine the Other as a bearer of responsibility is, for Levinas, already to violate his transcendence by comprehending him. Hence, as Robert Bernasconi suggests, although Levinas sometimes uses the expression "the-one-for-the-other" to describe the face-to-face, this phrase is misleading; in fact there is only I who am, in my being, "for-the-other" (Bernasconi 2002, 239; Cf. OB 136).

2.2.2 Concrete relations

Levinas does not explicitly or extensively take up the theme of concrete relations with Others as does Sartre, but he does indicate that concrete, intentional attitudes and behavior towards the Other do stem from the non-intentional manifestation of the face. Thus, for example, he asserts that proximity is "anarchically a relationship with a singularity without the mediation of any principle" while "[w]hat concretely corresponds to this description is my relationship with my neighbor" (100). The question of whether Levinas adequately explains how there can be ethical norms governing concrete relations with Others will be an important concern in later chapters, but for now let me take note of three particular points. First, Levinas claims that the structure of the oneself as hostage is the condition of ethical behavior:

It is through the condition of being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon and proximity -- even the little there is, even the simply 'After you, sir.' The unconditionality of being hostage is not the limit case of solidarity, but the condition for all solidarity. (118)
If there is a concrete ethics in Levinas, it will be because of the way in which the condition of being hostage enables concrete ethical behavior, over and against the way in which the ego-self or consciousness can hinder ethics according to Levinas. Thus for Levinas, as for Sartre, an account of ethical behavior will end up being a consequence of ethical theory that explains the condition of that behavior, where this condition is a certain structure of the self whereby the relation with the Other shapes the self's nature. Hence "egoism and altruism are posterior to responsibility, which makes them possible" by opening the oneself that would otherwise remain hidden behind the conscious ego (197n27). As we will see in Chapter 4, the condition of being a hostage or being responsible to the Other thus makes one ethically free, or free to choose the good and establish just relationships with others.

A second observation that should be made concerning concrete relations is that although Levinas always holds that the manifestation of the Other is a pre-intentional relation, he often describes this relation in his earlier works using terms that ordinarily pick out concrete qualities and relationships. The use of such themes suggests that it is in fact only through concrete intentional experience that we can encounter the Other who nevertheless transcends that experience. A prime example of this is the final section in

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15 See Overgaard 113-119 for an argument that according to Levinas the pre-intentional manifestation of the face depends on some manner of perceptual appearance. Overgaard argues that Levinas actually follows Husserl in holding that transcendence is given in perception. As I see it, this argument fails to do justice to Levinas' criticisms of Husserl and, more importantly, his insistence that transcendence is found at the limit of intentional consciousness, not within it. Overgaard is correct to point out, however, that in order of explanation Levinas' account of the face follows his discussion of concrete, intentional experience, suggesting that the relationship with the face "is precisely not completely separated from perceptual appearance" (117). Indeed, what Overgaard should have concluded is that the relationship is linked to perceptual appearance because it reveals the insufficiency of perception and thereby forces one to attend to manifestations, such as ethical obligation, that do not show themselves in intentional experience.
Totality and Infinity, entitled "Beyond the Face”. Here Levinas uses descriptions of love, femininity, and fecundity in order to explain the transcendence of the Other. Fecundity, for example, "establishes relationship with the absolute future, or infinite time", because it enables me to enter into relationship with a future that both is mine, in that I generate this "residue of identity", and yet is not mine, since it is not my own unique powers and possibilities that will be realized in it (TI 267-8). Note that what Levinas does here is to utilize particular aspects of a real experience, such as the experience of procreation, in order to show that from at least certain types of intentional experience -- in this case, erotic experience -- it is possible to enter into relation with that which transcends it. As Edith Wychogrod explains,

The major problem in founding transcendence lies in maintaining the integrity of the self while allowing the self to surpass itself. Sheer egoity cannot go beyond power and knowledge while remaining itself. Is it possible to understand the subject in some other way? The erotic subject fulfills these conditions. (133)

The themes of love and fecundity function similarly in other, earlier Levinas texts. In a 1979 preface to a new edition of Time and the Other, first published in 1948, Levinas himself notes that in the work "[t]he notion of a transcendent alterity -- one that opens time -- is at first sought starting with an alterity-content -- that is, starting with femininity" (36-37). In addition to femininity, Levinas also there uses the notions of paternity and fecundity in order to explain "the structure of transcendence". To be sure, he explicitly notes that "the Ego's fecundity" is here a "nonbiological" idea (Ibid.). Nevertheless, his early use of concrete relations in order to describe pre-intentional ones does suggest that it is in some way from the concrete that the face opens up its unique
mode of encounter, and moreover that certain types of concrete relation are more amenable to this encounter than others (36-7).

The third and most important topic regarding the way Levinas treats concrete relations that I would like to introduce here is Levinas' account of the "third" -- that is, another Other, whose appearance destabilizes the structure of the encounter with the face and moves this relationship to the level of intentional consciousness. Once we take into account the third, who "looks at me in the eyes of the Other", it turns out that the face does not only manifest itself but also "opens humanity" (TI 213). Surprisingly, Levinas claims that there is now an "equality" of the Other, myself, and the third, who are now posited as a "we"; the Other "commands me to command" and I too become a 'master' who issues language (Ibid.). Some of Levinas' clearest remarks on the third and the plurality of Others it establishes are found in the transcript of an interview that took place at the University of Leyden in 1975. Asked to explain his use of the term 'justice' to describe both the relation with the Other and the relation with a third party, Levinas explains,

[I]n the relationship with another I am always in relation with the third party. But he is also my neighbor. From this moment on, proximity becomes problematic: one must compare, weigh, think; one must do justice, which is the source of theory. ('Questions and Answers" 82)

16 Here I focus on Levinas' use of the "third" in Totality and Infinity and after, where it is clear that the term is linked to problems of justice and society beyond the face-to-face. It is worth noting, however, that when Levinas introduces the term the "third" -- e.g., in his 1954 essay, "The Ego and Totality" -- it is not fully clear whether the third is the other Other or whether the third introduces the order of justice. See Staehler pp. 115-117 for a brief summary of changes in Levinas' use of the term.
The third on Levinas' account does not manifest himself in a face-to-face relation but rather destabilizes the non-intentional encounter precisely because the Other qua absolute transcendence can only be singular. Once the self apprehends two such transcendences, it in fact fails to encounter them as absolutely transcendent, and instead distinguishes and understands them on the basis of intentional experience. Hence, while the situation of being a hostage grounds my own individuality, it does not seem to ensure the concrete particularity of the Other. Levinas' discussion of the third highlights the transcendental quality of the encounter with the single Other because, according to Levinas,

[I]n reality, the relationship with another is never uniquely the relationship with the other: from this moment on, the third is represented in the other; that is, in the very appearance of the other the third already regards me. (Ibid.)

Remarkably, then, concrete intersubjectivity for Levinas never occurs merely at the level of the non-intentional face-to-face, but rather must always take into account the third. Hence concrete relations are always carried out both on the level of intentional consciousness and the pre-intentional encounter that makes that consciousness possible.

17 This raises the question as to whether the ethical demand presented by the face establishes our responsibility for a particular Other or rather makes us responsible for others in general, or responsible to a universal call. Insofar as he distinguishes between the non-intentional responsibility that is constituted along with the hypostasis of the self and the ontological justice that becomes an ethical goal only with the arrival of the third, Levinas certainly wants to assert that our first relation with ethical transcendence is a relation with a unique Other. Whether his emphasis on the ineffability of the Other will allow him this is another question. Cf. Wyschogrod 2002 pp. 192-193 for a brief discussion of Derrida's response "to the criticism that undifferentiable alterity entails an empty universality".
2.3 The priority of the Other in Sartre and Levinas

As we have seen, both Sartre and Levinas assert that the encounter with the Other ruptures our conscious engagement with the world -- an assertion that seems to suggest that our worldly experience precedes that encounter. Each also maintains, however, that the Other is in some way always present within our experience of the world, altering the fundamental ontology of the self, such there never really is a "being-for-itself" that is not also determined by its "being-for-others" nor is there an ego-subject who comes to consciousness without becoming the hostage of the Other. If this is so, however, it seems that the encounter with the Other precedes conscious, worldly experience. In short, Sartre's and Levinas' descriptions of intersubjective experience may leave one wondering whether and in what sense the encounter with the Other is 'prior' or 'posterior' to our solitary engagement with the world and the fundamental ontology that I discussed in Chapter 1.

Certainly neither Sartre nor Levinas holds that either the solitary self or the encounter with the Other is temporally prior to the other. Neither is there a true phenomenological priority: the encounter with the Other does not presume an intentional awareness of the self, nor does the worldly life of the independent self require such an experience of an Other. Rather it seems that the ordering of these two levels is constituted by different sorts of transcendental priority because each is a condition of the other. On the one hand, by claiming that the encounter with the Other is a rupture with intentional experience, both Sartre and Levinas presume, and demonstrate by their order of explanation, that the sensible experience of an independent self is a condition of the relation with the Other. As we have seen, the Other manifests himself as the one whose
look surprises me, catching me as I peep through the keyhole; he is the one whose face jolts me out of my self-satisfaction. Yet although the claim that the Other interrupts the self indicates a certain priority of the solitary self over the Other, Sartre and Levinas also hold that in a different way the Other is prior to the self: the Other is always already a structure of the self, because the intersubjective encounter grounds a 'new' ontology of the self that turns out to be a foundational ontology, whether it be being-for-others or hypostasis by substitution. While this complex ordering could be a topic for a more sustained discussion, here I would simply like to offer a few remarks on the way in which the transcendental priority of the encounter with the Other conditions the ontology of consciousness and the self in Sartre and Levinas. This is because the priority of the Other is at the heart of Levinas' account of ethical freedom, and to a lesser extent, plays a role in Sartrean conversion -- both topics I will address in later chapters.

Some commentators implicitly take a stand on the priority of the Other to certain ontological structures of the self when they compare and contrast Sartre's and Levinas' accounts of the way in which the Other founds consciousness. For example, in one essay John Llewelyn asserts that the Sartrean look that causes an "internal haemorrhage in my universe" is "the foundation of my unreflective consciousness of myself" (Llewelyn 1988 144). Llewelyn contrasts this with the Levinasian 'haemorrhage', which "is not in the zone of self-consciousness, Selbstbewusstsein, or in any other region of consciousness, unconsciousness or being, Sein", but which is rather "an emptying out of my consciousness, a kenosis commanded by the ethical word of the other which inflicts a wound that never heals" (Ibid.). Llewelyn's discussion leaves the reader with the impression that for Sartre the look is a worldly event that enacts a change in the ontology
of consciousness, while for Levinas the Other encountered in the face manages to unravel ontology and consciousness altogether. For Sartre, then, the Other would be perhaps transcendentally prior to a certain sort of self-consciousness. For Levinas, meanwhile, the Other would manifest himself within or posterior to consciousness, and be prior to consciousness only in the sense of having power over it; once manifested, he would be no longer prior or posterior to it, since he completely "empties" it.

Arne Johan Vetlesen likewise emphasizes the power of the Levinasian Other to unravel the ontology of consciousness, although he also mentions a positive, constructive role of the Other that suggests the wound inflicted by the face within consciousness does heal after all:

The break with ontology in all its guises is to lay the ground for a "non-allergic" relation with alterity. It is to secure that the relationship with the Other commands the comprehension of Being rather than the Other way round. (Vetlesen 367)

In pointing out that the Other actually re-grounds the comprehension of Being, Vetlesen implicitly claims that Levinas' Other is a condition of ontology, and transcendentally prior to it. Meanwhile, Vetlesen's account of the Sartrean Other similarly suggests that the encounter with the Other is posterior to consciousness of the world but prior to at least one level of the self's ontology, which the encounter founds:

In turning my way, in looking at me, he does not leave my being as it is (which is what I want) but instead distorts it beyond my recognition by turning it into a new kind of being altogether -- i.e., my being-for-him. (366)

Despite their acknowledgement that the look of Sartre's Other brings about an ontological change in the self, both Llewelyn and Vetlesen present this ontological shift as less significant than the change brought about by Levinas' Other. Even though he 'does not
leave my being as it is', the Sartrean Other seems to leave intact my capacity to intend and know objects, and hence he is not, it seems, prior to the foundational ontology of the for-itself. For Levinas, by contrast, the priority of the Other corresponds to a more radical passivity of the self, such that knowledge, language, and free agency are all dependent on the manifestation of the Other. Looking at the matter this way, it seems that the Other is somewhat less 'prior' to the self in Sartre than he is in Levinas, in the sense that Sartre transcendentially grounds less of the self's ontological structure in the encounter with the Other. As Kelly Oliver puts it, "[w]hereas Sartre emphasizes a radical subjectivity at the center of the universe who is limited by others, Levinas emphasizes a radical alterity at the center of the universe of which subjectivity is a by-product" (Oliver 105).

Such a distinction between the priority of the Other in Sartre and Levinas, while basically correct, must be nuanced. Indeed, as we have seen, Sartre's discussion of the internal negation suggests that the limitation of my 'radical subjectivity' effected by the Other is at the same time a fruitful formation of it. According to Sartre, the Other not only grounds my being-for-others but thereby determines my free subjectivity from within (BN 312-315). Further, we must remember that Sartre, like Levinas, claims that the relation with the Other is 'pre-ontological' and takes pains to emphasize that one's fundamental connection with the Other is not realized through knowledge (BN 315, 338). Given such claims it may seem at times that for Sartre the Other is after all a condition not only of being-for-others, but also of conscious being-for-itself and its free projects. That said, the basic ontological structure of being-for-itself -- i.e., the free negation of being-in-itself that constitutes being-for-itself -- is not altered by the Other on Sartre's account, nor does he attribute any transcendental role to the Other concerning that
structure. In truth, Sartre's Other determines my subjectivity only by founding being-for-others, a new ontological level, and by involving me in concrete relations that in turn shape my free projects. Intersubjectivity is experienced with a 'pre-ontological' certainty not because the Other conditions the in-itself or the for-itself, but because he and his relation to my being are, as a matter of fact, directly encountered within human reality. As I have noted, this is what Sartre means when he calls the Other's existence a factual or contingent necessity (BN 336-337). Because Sartre thinks the Other grounds a new mode of conscious being but not does not claim that the Other is prior to being-for-itself, he also tends to see conversion and ethics as having ontological effects but does not see them as the ultimate foundation of ontology -- a point my brief examination of Sartre's *Notebooks for an Ethics* has already suggested and which will become clearer in Chapter 3.

With Levinas, meanwhile, we run the risk of being swept up in the frequent affirmations of the Other's priority to being, ontology, and all intentional consciousness. The Other is "[i]mmemorial, unrepresentable, invisible, the past that bypasses the present, the pluperfect past, falls into a past that is a gratuitous lapse" (OB 11). On the 'hither side' of being, the Other is so completely before and above my conscious self that he is his own beginning and principle, "an-archic". These affirmations, however, which saturate *Otherwise than Being*, can cause one to lose sight of the "I" discussed in so much of Levinas' early work. This is the "I" that necessarily serves as a "point of departure" for the relation with radical alterity (TI 36). The *il y a* likewise represents an ontological level in Levinas that precedes and exceeds the intelligibility introduced by intersubjectivity; it is "the non-sense in which essence turns, and in which thus turns the justice issued out of
signification" (OB 163). In fact, for Levinas the seemingly absolute priority of the Other does not place him at the 'center of the universe' as though he were the source of being itself, nor is he the source of all consciousness. Rather, the priority of the Other indicates first and foremost the passivity of consciousness vis-à-vis the Other, the powerlessness of objectifying consciousness, and the power of the signification introduced by the language of the Other over my own intentions. Levinas' key claim regarding the priority of the Other is that "[n]ot everything that is in consciousness would be posited by consciousness" (OB 101). Such a claim does not imply that consciousness is merely, as Oliver suggests, a "by-product" of the Other. Rather, on Levinas' account of intersubjectivity the Other breaks into self-satisfied conscious life and inserts himself at its foundation, transforming the way in which the self pulls itself out of anonymous being -- becoming, through this a-temporal event, the defining purpose for which the self exists.

In Chapter 4, I will show how, for Levinas, ethical freedom is bound up with this event. First, however, let us turn in Chapter 3 to Sartre's phenomenological ethics: to his account of ethical freedom, and to the way in which conversion alters the fundamental project of the self and one's relations with others.
CHAPTER 3:
SARTRE'S ETHICS: CREATION, AUTHENTICITY, AND SITUATED FREEDOM

In Chapter 1, I discussed Sartre's and Levinas' fundamental ontologies of the self. In Chapter 2, we saw that both Sartre and Levinas describe the encounter with the Other as a radical event that transforms and re-grounds the ontology of the self. Thus for each, the relation with the Other is in some way constitutive of selfhood as well as dependent on it. In the next two chapters, I will explain how Sartre and Levinas each develops an ethical theory on the basis of his phenomenological ontology and account of relations with others. In Chapter 3, I will focus on Sartre's ethics, in which ethical self-transformation -- which Sartre calls "conversion" -- comes about through the exercise of one's radical freedom, which occurs in "history" and in relation with other persons. In Chapter 4, I will turn to Levinas, for whom ethical self-transformation is an immediate, a-historical event that grounds yet also seems to presuppose my radical freedom to respond to an Other. Finally, in Chapter 5, I will argue that the contributions of Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenological ethics are metaethical. In particular, they propose to us that ethics is a matter self-transformation and that the ethical life is one wherein one allows one's free choices to be determined by values and meanings that are created in relations with others.
3.1 The "Ethical Implications" of Sartre's ontology: man as an \textit{ens causa sui}

The last few pages of Sartre's Conclusion to \textit{Being and Nothingness} are entitled "Ethical Implications". The title is apt, although the truncated discussion of man's end and the origin of values is likely to disappoint a reader who might justifiably have hoped that several hundred pages spent explicating the ontology of freedom would yield more than three or four pages of ethical implications. Here it is only fair to point out that Sartre must at some point have shared his reader's expectation -- hence his final promise to devote an entire future work to answering the questions raised in this section "on the ethical plane" (798). The fact that Sartre never finished the \textit{Notebooks} project should not encourage a reader's disappointment at the apparent limitations of an ethics that can be drawn from the phenomenological ontology of \textit{Being and Nothingness}. On the contrary, the discussions of conversion and the relation between freedom and history found in the \textit{Notebooks} go a long way towards fleshing out the "ethical implications" of Sartre's account.\footnote{Simone de Beauvoir's ethical writings, especially her \textit{Ethics of Ambiguity}, also indicate the ethical directions in which Sartre's existentialism might be developed. Although I focus on Sartre's own published and unpublished work in this dissertation, Beauvoir's \textit{Ethics} has proven quite helpful to me in puzzling out the meaning of certain key concepts in the \textit{Notebooks}. From time to time in this chapter and in Chapter 5 I will indicate points of comparison between Sartre and Beauvoir in the footnotes. In another place it would be an interesting project to consider Beauvoir in her own right and to explore with the care it deserves the complex relationship between her ethics and Sartre's.}

Sartre makes two important and related claims in the discussion at the end of \textit{Being and Nothingness}. The first is that ontology does not allow us to derive determinate moral imperatives, but it does "allow us to catch a glimpse of what sort of ethics will assume its responsibilities when confronted with a \textit{human reality in situation}" because it "has revealed . . . the origin and nature of \textit{value}" (795). Ethics, then, is not for Sartre an \textit{a}
priori science; rather, obligations and responsibilities arise because the free for-itself is confronted by its situation. Neither are values a priori goods that exist independently of the for-itself in situation. In fact, values for Sartre are neither innate nor learned, neither intuited directly nor deduced from our knowledge of human essence in general. Rather, claims Sartre, ontology has revealed "that value is the lack in relation to which the for-itself determines its being as a lack" (Ibid.). This means that the free activity of a for-itself by which it determines its own being as opposed to the in-itself -- i.e., the attitudes it assumes, the project it undertakes, etc. -- is at the same time the source of value as such. A value on this picture ends up being some quality, state, or end that the for-itself has established as a good by desiring to be or have it.

The claim that values are established in and through the activity of the for-itself leads to Sartre's second important assertion, which is that "existential psychoanalysis is moral description, for it releases to us the ethical meaning of various human projects" (796). Recall that "existential psychoanalysis" is Sartre's term for an investigation into an individual's actions and attitudes that uncovers the fundamental project, or ultimate ends, that the individual has set for himself (Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 19-20). Sartre can assert that this sort of analysis is a moral analysis both because it aims to uncover an individual's ultimate end and because it divulges the values that he implicitly establishes in seeking that end; hence it reveals how in practice an individual has understood and pursued his highest good. According to Sartre, the "ideal meaning[s] of all human attitudes" revealed in existential analysis are "beyond egoism and altruism" (Ibid.). That is, this moral analysis does not aim to uncover whether we are ultimately moral from self-interest or
from pure disinterested motives. Rather, what existential psychoanalysis contributes is an account of the link between an individual's varied projects and the ultimate end he seeks.

As we have seen, Sartre claims that a human person has no determinate nature or fixed properties apart from the perpetual obligation he faces to determine himself through his consciousness and néantisation of the world. If Sartre held to this claim strictly, it would be difficult to see why the relation investigated by existential psychoanalysis between an individual's projects and his ultimate end reveals something ethical — that is, something about the good(s) that the individual pursues or brings about. In fact, however, Sartre paves the way for ethics by claiming that all men direct themselves toward the same type of ultimate end. Despite each individual's radical freedom to set projects and create values for himself, the form of any individual's ultimate goal is unavoidably fixed: all men aim to be a "synthetic fusion of the in-itself with the for-itself", or as Sartre also puts it, a self-cause or ens causa sui (797).

Sartre develops his claim that the goal of becoming a self-cause is the fundamental project of every person in the section of Being and Nothingness where he introduces and explains existential psychoanalysis.² There, he first explains that a free human necessarily embarks on a "the project of being", or an effort to establish his existence. This follows necessarily from the basic ontology of the for-itself:

Fundamentally man is the desire to be, and the existence of this desire is not to be established by an empirical induction; it is the result of an a priori description of the being of the for-itself, since desire is a lack and since the for-itself is the being which is to itself its own lack of being . . . The original project which is expressed in each of our empirically observable tendencies is then the project of being (722).

² The section is Part IV, Chapter 2, Section I.

136
In fact, the for-itself attempts to establish its being as though it were or could be fixed, unchanging being-in-itself. This means that the "project of being" turns out to be the project of becoming an impossible ontological amalgam of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Because this ideal is a mode of being that possess the stability of the in-itself while still enjoying the self-determining powers of the for-itself, Sartre calls it the "in-itself-for-itself". According to Sartre, the ideal of successfully, permanently, and independently establishing one's own being in this way is the implicit but universal goal of all human projects:

The fundamental value which presides over this project is exactly the in-itself-for-itself; that is, the ideal of a consciousness which would be the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness which it would have of itself. (723-724)

Note that if this ideal were to be realized, the for-itself would endow itself with being-in-itself through its own consciousness of itself. This is why Sartre asserts that this ideal, or fundamental value, is an ideal of becoming a self-cause and hence "can be called God"; this ideal fusion of being-for-itself and being-in-itself is in fact nothing less than the attempt to be a self-cause, or to secure one's being while remaining free from any limitations that would be imposed by a fixed essence (724).

According to Sartre, the goal of becoming a self-cause is impossible to achieve since the ideal represents an impossible ontological union of the two fundamental types of being. Such a union is impossible because being-for-itself comes about as a nihilation of being-in-itself. As Sartre reminds us in the conclusion, consciousness founds a self only through "a rupture in the identity-of-being of the in-itself":

137
Consciousness as the nihilation of being appears therefore as one stage in a progression toward the immanence of causality -- i.e., toward being a self-cause. The progression, however, stops there as the result of the insufficiency of being in the for-itself. The temporalization of consciousness is not an ascending progress toward the dignity of the *causa sui*; it is a surface run-off whose origin is on the contrary, the impossibility of being a self-cause. (788-789)

Consciousness can never fully and firmly *be its own cause* because it founds itself only by distinguishing itself from stable, self-identical being. However, precisely because it does *found itself* by distinguishing itself from being-in-itself, it is necessarily and "effectively" a perpetual project of founding itself qua being and a perpetual failure of this project" (789). Hence Sartre insists that from the perspective of "ontology" consciousness arises "as if" the in-itself split itself in an effort "to attain the dignity of the self-cause" (792). The very existence of being-for-itself hence already realizes an unstable relation vis-à-vis the in-itself, a relation wherein being seeks to found itself but thereby necessarily fails to become a self-grounded totality by pulling itself apart into two irreconcilable regions. According to Sartre ontology cannot discover the "meaning" of this unstable relation, but existential psychoanalysis reveals that for conscious beings, this structure is the key to their meaning, fundamental goal, and ultimate limitation (789ff., 797).

In fact, what existential psychoanalysis reveals is that fundamental ontology yields normative structure. Ontology forms a hypothesis concerning the in-itself and the for-itself: namely, that "[e]verything happens . . . as if the in-itself and the for-itself were presented in a state of disintegration in relation to an ideal synthesis" (792). It remains nevertheless incapable of explaining why "we define ourselves *a priori* by means of a pre-ontological comprehension of an *ens causa sui*" (*Ibid.*). While ontology is capable
only of observing that "everything happens as if" the two regions of being "succeeded in realizing only a missing God", existential psychoanalysis reveals the meaning of this structure -- or, rather, reveals that this structure is meaningful to a conscious being (792). The in-itself-for-itself is not just a name for the impossible totality of being, nor is it a mere hermeneutic in terms of which being-for-itself must understand its distinction from being-in-itself. Appearing as God, this structure is "the first 'sensible to the heart' of man" (724). It is "the ideal of a consciousness" and "the permanent limit in terms of which man makes known to himself what he is" (Ibid.). "To be man", claims Sartre, "means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God" (724).

Sartre's discussion of man's ultimate desire suggests that men share some common nature -- an idea that Sartre is generally keen to reject. Hence he takes pains to distinguish between his universal claims about what it means for man necessarily to pursue a certain ideal and the claim that there is a human nature. Sartre admits that it might seem that in claiming men have one common end he contradicts his account of an individual's radical freedom to define his own nature. He defends himself from this

Jonathan Webber seems to make a similar point when he asserts that the human desire for being-in-itself is "the empirical reality of human life in our culture rather than the ontological structure of our way of being" (109). Webber's distinction between empirical reality and ontological structure, however, is aimed at arguing that Sartre can't really mean "that the desire to be God follows from the structure of being-for-itself . . . and must instead be saying that it is the fundamental project of people in bad faith" (Ibid.). I confess I can make little sense of Webber's point here, since as we have seen Sartre holds that the ontological structure of consciousness -- being-for-itself -- just does result in the project of bad faith, if only as a moment on the road to some more authentic understanding of the self. Thus, using Webber's sense of the terms, Sartre holds both that the desire to be God follows from one's ontological structure (because he holds that it is the universal ideal of a being-for-itself, or its first fundamental project) and that it is the fundamental project of people in bad faith. Webber is concerned to defend the distinction between bad faith, which is a project wherein I behave "as though my actions flow from a fixed character" and the desire to be God, which would be a fundamental project of attempting to become a fixed nature (109, italics added). Sartre, however, has no such concern. For him, activity constitutes projects, and the totality of one's actions (projects) reveals one's fundamental project. Hence there is no problem in suggesting that the project of bad faith -- behaving as though one were a certain type of being -- really reveals that one is attempting to become that type of being.
objection by asserting that the project of being God is not a human nature or essence, but rather is the "meaning" of any particular empirical desire, understood in the context of the individual's fundamental desire (724). He also calls this universal goal "the truth" of man's fundamental desire and of his freedom. Sartre argues that the universal goal of human existence does not constitute a human essence by claiming that the goal of becoming a self-cause, or the "desire of being in general", is an "abstract meaningful structure" that concerns a level of existence one step above the fundamental desire that men express in concrete, particular situations and two steps above the empirical desires that "symbolize" the fundamental desire as well as dictate their concrete attitudes and behavior (Ibid.). Despite Sartre's claim, however, that concrete empirical desires "are never constituted by this meaning" -- i.e., by the goal of becoming a self-cause -- it is difficult to see how he can avoid assuming that there is a fixed nature of conscious beings once he admits that the desire of becoming a self-cause is the "fundamental value" that "presides over" the project of the for-itself as such (723). No doubt this is why Sartre, though initially reluctant to use the term "nature" or "essence", creates his own paraphrase: the "desire of being in general", he notes, "must be considered as human reality in the person" (724).\(^4\) As for Sartre's claim that this fundamental value (i.e., the

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\(^4\) Earlier in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre explicitly criticizes what he takes to be a traditional account of human essence or nature. Man's essence, Sartre writes, is his "self with its *a priori* and historical content" (72). "Essence", he continues, "is everything in the human being which we can indicate with the words -- *that is.*" Human activity always surpasses human "essence" for Sartre; as a "totality of characteristics which *explain* the act", man's "essence" always falls short of describing true human reality because it cannot capture being-for-itself and hence misses the distinction between man as an object in the world and free human consciousness. According to Sartre we are always detached from our essence, or a step after our nature: "The overflow of our consciousness progressively constitutes [the] nature that is ours, but it remains always behind us and it dwells in us as the permanent object of our retrospective comprehension" (73).
ideal of the *ens causa sui*) is more abstract than man's empirical and fundamental desires, it is nevertheless clear that this value must in some way determine an individual's concrete manner of existing since "it brings about his community with others, thus making it possible to state that there is a truth concerning man and not only concerning individuals who can not be compared" (724-5).

Regardless of whether one uses the terms "essence" or "nature", the fact is that Sartre quite clearly thinks that there are universal truths about what man is. This is evident every time Sartre insists that man must make himself or that man must pursue being through his projects, and it is particularly manifest when Sartre claims that "man makes himself man in order to be God" or again, "man loses himself in order that the self-cause may exist" (796). Importantly, these truths about what man is serve as a foundation for ethical claims. Sufficiently Greek to assume that to act for an end is to act for a perceived good, Sartre assumes throughout *Being and Nothingness* that because man is radically free to set his own ends he is thereby free to set his own values; that is,

In asserting that Sartre actually holds that there is a human nature in *Being and Nothingness*, I do not mean to assert that Sartre furtively accepts that there is nature in a traditional sense. On the contrary, it is clear that he cannot do this since it would mean that human reality could be reduced to being-in-itself. However, by claiming that there is a fixed goal of a for-itself's attitudes and choices that constitutes the meaning of all of his free activity, Sartre does hold that there is an *a priori* truth about who and what each human individual must be -- and indeed, Sartre straightforwardly admits this in the *Notebooks for an Ethics*.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, §3, Sartre's aversion to the term "nature" clearly wanes in the *Notebooks*. Acknowledging that others have challenged him to explain his avowed rejection of human nature in light of his apparent position that man is by nature inauthentic, Sartre writes, "I do not deny that there is a nature; that is, that one begins with flight and inauthenticity" (6). Instead, he claims, "the question is whether this nature is universal or historical" (*Ibid.*). In fact, the question of the sense in which inauthenticity, bad faith, and/or radical freedom can be considered man's nature is something of a leitmotif in the *Notebooks*. Throughout, Sartre is concerned to defend the idea that man's "nature" does not conflict with his freedom, as being-for-itself, to choose and make himself. Hence Sartre reconciles himself to the admission that there is a human nature but holds that this nature is "one's choice of oneself in the fact of other people's oppressive freedom" (*Ibid.*)
he links man's ends with the good for man. In the absence of any actual self-cause -- i.e.,
God -- man's endless pursuit of the in-itself-for-itself is at the same time a creation of
values. Thus once ontology and existential psychoanalysis reveal man's end, they "must
reveal to the moral agent that he is the being by whom values exist" (797). This universal
truth about the human person is normatively significant insofar as it represents both a
definition of man and a moral obligation. That is, it constitutes a definition of man as a
moral agent by affirming that his choices, attitudes, and actions have a meaning that
defines the good. As Sartre puts it, because the goal of becoming a self-cause
immediately encompasses the task of setting one's own values, herein "we are already on
the moral plane" (796).

There are at least two problems with the idea that man creates his own values as
part of his endeavor to become an ens causa sui. The first is that values, ostensibly, are
not the sort of thing that one can create for oneself; people judge and act according to
values precisely because they assume that they are objective truths or "transcendent
givens" (Ibid.). Sartre addresses this sort of objection explicitly at various points Being
and Nothingness. Values, he notes early on, "lay claim to a foundation", but to assume
they actually are foundational or transcendentally founded is a form of bad faith (76). Thus
as soon as we engage in the projects by means of which we endeavor to be an in-itself-
for-itself, we are not only "already on the moral plane", we are also

concurrently on that of bad faith, for it is an ethics that is ashamed of itself and
does not dare speak its name. It has obscured all its goals in order to free itself
from anguish. (796)
Sartre uses the term "serious mood" or "spirit of seriousness" to label this particular sort of bad faith (Ibid., Cf. 78). This attitude, he says,

has two characteristics: it considers values as transcendent givens independent of human subjectivity, and transfers the quality of "desirable" from the ontological structure of things to their simple material constitution. (Ibid.)

Despite our efforts to pretend that we aim at realizing values that are satisfyingly "independent of human subjectivity", Sartre claims that purifying reflection will reveal our bad faith while existential psychoanalysis will reveal our true human purpose.

The second problem with Sartre's account of the 'moral plane' thus far is that the goal at the heart of all human action -- the goal of creating values in an effort to be an ens causa sui -- appears to be both impossible and inevitable, in such a way that it is difficult to see how this value constitutes a criterion for deciding between different courses of action. Perhaps, we might think, an action is to be chosen if it helps us realize this fundamental value; that is, the ens causa sui serves as a fundamental value that brings us to a "moral plane" because some acts are better (i.e., better at realizing this value) than others. Throughout much of Being and Nothingness, however, Sartre seems to hold that every action is an action equally in pursuit of being an ens causa sui. As evidence, consider his assertion that we are condemned "to remake the Self that constitutes my free being"; Sartre's account of the free for-itself makes it seem that the for-itself is inevitably engaged in a process of grounding itself (76). Alternately, consider Sartre's notorious claim from the end of Being and Nothingness that

all human activities are equivalent (for they all tend to sacrifice man in order that the self-cause may arise) and that all are on principle doomed to failure. Thus it
amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations. (797)

Sartre claims here that all activities are equivalent and doomed to failure precisely because all activities actually pursue the impossible goal of becoming an *ens causa sui*. All activities likewise "sacrifice man", asserts Sartre, because the meaning or value behind all of them all is the pursuit of a form of existence that is beyond man and with which man has "no common measure" (796).

Nevertheless, Sartre's apparent support for the idea that each individual inevitably acts so as to realize his fundamental value, such that all acts are to some extent "equivalent", is inconsistent. First of all, immediately after claiming that all activities are equivalent, Sartre suggests a way in which they are not. Let us continue with the passage cited above:

Thus it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations. If one of these activities takes precedence over the other, this will not be because of its real goal but because of the degree of consciousness which it possesses of its ideal goal; and in this case it will be the quietism of the solitary drunkard which will take precedence over the vain agitation of the leader of nations. (797)

Thus Sartre suggests a criterion for judging that one act is better than another at realizing man's fundamental value: an act is better if it possesses a higher "degree of consciousness . . . of its ideal goal." Sartre does not explain whether and how this apparent criterion of action can be derived from the normative ideal of becoming a self-cause, or whether perhaps it constitutes another absolute value. Nor does he explain what it means for one act to "take precedence" over another. Finally, although he suggests that all acts do not equally realize or represent man's fundamental value, Sartre does not discuss whether it is
possible that some acts completely fail to realize this meaning. Is it possible that some acts fully fail to realize man's aim of becoming a self-cause, perhaps because we accidentally pursue them with no consciousness of our "ideal goal"? Even more interestingly, is it possible for us to perform some acts with a consciousness of an alternate or opposed meaning, so as to evade or reject the goal of being a self-cause?

Sartre himself raises this possibility in a series of rhetorical questions that he asks at the close of Being and Nothingness. Here he questions whether it might be possible for freedom to reject "the value or the ideal presence of the ens causa sui":

What will become of freedom if it turns its back upon this value? Will freedom carry this value along with it whatever it does and even in its very turning back upon the in-itself-for-itself? . . . Or will freedom, by the very fact that it apprehends itself as a freedom in relation to itself, be able to put an end to the reign of this value? In particular is it possible for freedom to take itself for a value as the source of all value, or must it necessarily be defined in relation to a transcendent value which haunts it? (797-798)

The question here is whether or not a free, conscious being is in fact doomed to pursue the fundamental value that has been revealed by existential psychoanalysis, that of becoming a self-cause. This might be the case if it is indeed inevitable that every human action implicitly and unavoidably reaffirms that goal. If that is not so, however, then we can hold out hope that a free being can somehow reach a genuine understanding of himself and realize his existence as being-for-itself without needing to pursue the impossible goal of grounding his own being. Sartre's rhetorical questions do seem to support this hope. According to Sartre, a free being who rejects the goal of becoming a self-cause "chooses not to recover itself but to flee itself, not to coincide with itself but to be always at a distance from itself" (Ibid.). Such an individual would be always "at a
distance from" himself because his existence would be only that of being-for-itself. Having ceased the fruitless pursuit of being-in-itself, he would not be stably self-coincident but would rather be constituted only by the self-awareness and nihilating activity that characterize being-for-itself.

Although Sartre suggests that it may be possible to reject the goal of becoming an in-itself-for-itself, he does not in *Being and Nothingness* explain how an individual can do so. In particular, he does not explain how the free choice to escape the futile pursuit of the in-itself-for-itself can be distinguished from a form of bad faith wherein an individual simply pretends that he is not what he is. Nor does Sartre explain how or whether this use of freedom would affect the fundamental ontology of the for-itself. At the close of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre raises these questions but leaves them unresolved:

What are we to understand by this being which wills to hold itself in awe, to be at a distance from itself? Is it a question of bad faith or of another fundamental attitude? And can one *live* this new aspect of being? In particular will freedom by taking itself for an end escape all situation? Or on the contrary, will it remain situated? Or will it situate itself so much the more precisely and the more individually as it projects itself further in anguish as a conditioned freedom and accepts more fully its responsibility as an existent by whom the world comes into being? All these questions, which refer us to a pure and not an accessory reflection, can find their reply only on the ethical plane. We shall devote to them a future work. (798)

In fact Sartre does attempt to address these questions in the *Notebooks for an Ethics*. There, the portrait of the good life for a free being clearly follows the outline suggested by his final rhetorical question. Freedom that realizes itself as such through pure reflection can "*live* this new aspect of being". This occurs, however, not because a free being escapes all aspects of his situation, which would presumably be the case if he were able to exist purely as being-for-itself. Rather, the free being understands himself as "a
conditioned freedom" and it is precisely in so doing that he realizes his being more fully and escapes the lure of bad faith.

3.2 The ens causa sui revisited: freedom and conversion in the Notebooks for an Ethics

There are a few lengthy passages in which Sartre discusses the idea of the "causa sui" in Notebooks for an Ethics. In these, Sartre is initially concerned to explain how a being could be a self-cause given the dual ontology of being-in-itself and being-for-itself to which he is committed. Sartre also endeavors to describe an alternative to the project of becoming a self-cause. This alternative is a new type of lived self-understanding that comes about through a "conversion" to pure reflection.5

Recall that pure reflection for Sartre is one of two main types of self-reflection, the other of which is impure or accessory reflection. As I explained in Chapter 1, in pure reflection consciousness grasps itself qua its instantaneous, transparent activity of positional engagement in the world. Impure reflection, by contrast, constitutes unreflected consciousness as an ego and its contents as transcendent objects. Thus in pure reflection, Sartre claims, consciousness "keeps to the given" and thereby comes to understand that it exists in the mode of free being-for-itself; in accessory reflection, by contrast, consciousness "affirms more than it knows" and imagines that the nature and objects of experience of its own rarefied self, or ego, constitute objective limits to

5 In The Ethics of Ambiguity, Simone de Beauvoir also develops the theme of an ethical conversion that is a shift away from the project of making oneself a synthesis of the for-itself and the in-itself. As she describes it, in conversion man wills himself free (24-25). This idea, she notes, is in a sense contradictory since "man is originally free", but it is nevertheless meaningful since by avoiding or denying that fact "one can choose not to will himself free. In laziness, heedlessness, capriciousness, cowardice, impatience, one contests the meaning of the project at the very moment that one defines it" (25). Hence, for Beauvoir, conversion signifies a willingness to "disclose" being and to "assume my project positively".
freedom (BN 64-5). In impure or accessory reflection, then, consciousness apprehends its activity only by fixing itself as though it were being-in-itself. Thus, for example, in impure reflection a student might say to himself, "I am a conscientious, eager student", imagining that these qualities belong to some ego or self who he is. Meanwhile, in pure reflection the student realizes that he is at every moment only what he makes of himself, such that while he may have chosen to be conscientious and eager in the past, he will continue to be so only if he creates himself thus by, e.g., doing his reading assignments, preparing for class, spending time on his term papers, etc. While it may be comforting for the student to imagine that he is already established as conscientious, Sartre points out that the attempt to rely on one's past activities in order to determine the outcome of choices with which one is presently faced may just be the denial of freedom, or an exercise in bad faith.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Sartre describes the conversion to ethics as a turning away from the attempt to fix oneself as a being-in-itself. Thus, it makes sense that Sartre proposes that conversion is brought about by a shift from impure, accessory reflection to pure reflection. It may at first seem strange that the event that inaugurates ethics is a mere shift in the way consciousness views itself and its activity in the world. However, we must remember that "reflection" in Sartre's sense "is in no way contemplative; it is itself a project" (NE 479). To be more precise, "the existent is a project, and reflection is the project of taking up this project" (Ibid.). An individual for-itself engages in reflection, or takes up the project of himself, when he "accept(s) calling itself into question as existing and (replies) to this question by the decision to go on" (Ibid.). This move involves realizing that one's mode of being is "diasporic being" -- a term Sartre introduced but
used rarely in *Being and Nothingness*, in order to signify the fact that the for-itself includes several "dimensions of nihilation, or . . . several original relations of being with the self" (*Ibid.*, BN 195). In pure reflection, then, a for-itself chooses projects that realize these various original relations, which include "reflection, transcendence, being-in-the-world, and being-for-others" (*BN* 195). In sum, conversion as the shift to pure reflection marks an alternative to the project of making oneself a self-cause because it means embracing the ambiguities of free existence and attempting to live as being-for-itself. As Sartre explains, "the existent in effect renounces being as in-itself-for-itself" (*NE* 479).

In the *Notebooks*, Sartre asserts that the conversion to pure reflection is caused by the failure of an individual's initial fundamental project. He suggests that a route to pure reflection may be realized in three ways, or owing to three "motives" (*motifs*): (1) "the very structure of alienation (which I have to uphold through the bad faith of my complicity)", (2) "the failure of the For-itself's attempt to be in-itself-for-itself", and (3) "the failure of accessory reflection" (*NE* 473). I will briefly consider each of these motives in turn.

Sartre adopts the term "alienation" to signify a certain type of oppression whereby the separation of a worker from the product of his labor (e.g., by a manager or consumer) forces the worker to grasp himself from without, "as Other starting from the Other" (472).

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6 Note that "motif" is translated here as "motive" in contrast with Hazel Barnes decision to translate it as "cause" in *Being and Nothingness*. See *Being and Nothingness* 579 for Sartre's well-known distinction between a cause [*motif*] and a motive [*mobile*]. There, Sartre says that a *motif* is "a certain objective structure of the world" while a *mobile* is a for-itself's "non-thetic consciousness of itself as a project towards an end". However, since both the "objective" *motif* and ostentibly subjective *mobile* are constituted by consciousness and exist only through the free projects of the for-itself, neither picks out a feature of the world that independently determines the for-itself to choose or act in one way rather than another. Hence for Sartre the causes and motives of any human act or event -- conversion included -- are constituted as such because the for-itself, in choosing and pursuing some end, implicitly or explicitly agrees to let them serve as his motives.
Alienation according to Sartre shows that human work as such potentially includes pure reflection; if a worker is capable of being forced to understand himself from without, then he already understands that he is more than his work. In alienation, he is at a distance from his work, which gives him the perspective to understand that he, its free creator, has a different type of being than his creation. As Sartre puts it, the structure of alienation shows that "in all human activity there is an understanding of the human condition and of freedom" (Ibid.). Alienation becomes a motive for conversion when an individual embraces his capacity for pure reflection. Sartre associates this shift with the individual's rejection of his oppression. The act of recognizing his situation and true dignity in pure reflection becomes a first step towards changing his economic and practical relation to his work.

The second and third motives for conversion that Sartre mentions are more directly linked to the ontological structures of Being and Nothingness. The failure of the attempt to be an in-itself-for-itself becomes a trigger for conversion when it push[es] the For-itself to ask itself the pre-judicial question of the meaning of its acts and the reason for its failure. Then the problem gets posed as follows: Why is the human world inevitably a world of failure, what is there in the essence of human effort such that it seems doomed in principle to failure? This question is a solicitation for us to place ourselves on the plane of reflection and to envisage human action reflectively in terms of its maxims, its means, and its goals. (472)

Accessory reflection might seem to be the for-itself's means of answering such questions; by reflecting on its own awareness, consciousness attempts "to regain itself" or to understand the meaning of its free activity. However, accessory reflection fails to help an individual understand the meaning of his existence because in this sort of reflection he takes his reflective self to be an independent ego separate from its situation and the
objects of consciousness. Although he may in this way achieve some understanding of conscious life, he never understands himself as a unity of what Sartre calls "reflecting" and "reflected" -- i.e., ego and object, the conscious self who apprehends the world and the living self who makes it. Finally, the failure of accessory reflection, a "radical and constant failure in my psychological life", becomes another motive for the shift to nonaccessory reflection because this pure reflection opens the possibility of understanding one's conscious self without finding oneself at a terrifying distance from it (473).

In this discussion of conversion's motives, Sartre does not clarify how one first perceives the possibility of reflection. Thus it remains unexplained how consciousness, alienated or frustrated by the failure of its previous efforts 'to regain itself', raises the question of meaning in a new way and stumbles upon a novel route. Neither does Sartre clarify whether all three motives for pure reflection -- alienation, the failure of the attempt to be a causa sui, and the failure of accessory reflection -- are necessary or sufficient for the shift to pure, nonaccessory reflection. Instead, he simply calls them "a bundle of solicitations that may lead to pure reflection" (473). Finally, Sartre fails to explain how alienation and the failure of accessory reflection are related to the fundamental project of becoming a causa sui that lies behind all human projects prior to conversion. Given the account of man's fundamental project in Being and Nothingness,
one might suspect that *all* shifts to conversion are in some way related to the failure of
this project.\(^7\)

Sartre does not fully resolve these residual questions regarding conversion and its
motives. Conversion, he explains, comes about when consciousness, seeking to overcome
previous failures and determine its own meaning, abandons accessory reflection and
engages in pure reflection, or authentic self-understanding. Yet who or what triggers this
shift, inaugurating ethics? Further, how does this shift affect the way an individual
exercises his freedom and the activities in which he chooses to engage? Asking these
questions can help to frame some of Sartre's comments regarding the role of free choice
and the ethical importance of history in the *Notebooks*. In the remaining part of this
section, I will endeavor to explain briefly how the historicized account of freedom found
in the *Notebooks* helps to elucidate conversion and the beginning of ethics. Finally, in the
last section of this chapter, I will discuss how Sartre understands relations with others to
be part of the historical context within which conversion is realized.

First, although Sartre's discussion of the motives for conversion does not fully
answer the question of why conversion occurs, it is important to see that conversion does
not occur *simply* because the project of becoming a self-cause fails or because alienation

\(^7\) In fact, although Sartre never makes this claim explicitly, comments in the *Notebooks* do suggest
that there is a unity among the "bundle" of motives that lead to conversion. Consider, for example, the
following notes, which can be found just prior to Sartre's discussion of the three motives for conversion:

Conversion: nonaccessory reflection. Its motive: the impossibility of recovering oneself. The
meaning of conversion: rejection of alienation. (470)

These comments are fragmentary, but what is nevertheless interesting is that what Sartre later
describes as three motives are grouped together here under a single motive. The shift from alienation
becomes the "meaning" of conversion while conversion just is pure reflection, consonant with Sartre's
claim that reflection is not merely contemplation. Meanwhile, the "motive" -- here, singular -- for this new
type of reflection is "the impossibility of recovering oneself".
opens a path by which an individual can better understand himself from both a subjective and an objective perspective. Indeed, this is manifestly not the case since not all individuals who find themselves in these situations undergo conversion. Sartre himself makes this observation near the beginning of the *Notebooks*:

> It is not a matter of showing how pure reflection emerges from impure reflection but how it can do so. Otherwise, we would be dealing with a dialectic, not with ethics. In the same way, moreover, the passage from the prereflective to reflection is a free drama of the person. (5)

As I have already explained, the shift from impure reflection to pure reflection is none other than ethical conversion. By suggesting that this shift is a "free drama of the person", Sartre indicates that conversion is not the fixed outcome of any motives that may condition or cause it, but rather that the freedom of the individual determines in some way when or how pure reflection results from the failure of impure reflection. 8

Nevertheless, the passage should not be read as claiming that an individual exercises total control over those choices and forms of consciousness that cause and comprise the move to pure reflection. To do this would be to overlook the heavy emphasis in the *Notebooks* on "history" -- that is, roughly, the inescapable progression of

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8 In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* Beauvoir agrees that the failure of impure reflection, or the spirit of seriousness, does not necessarily lead to conversion. In the second section of her work, she discusses a variety of attitudes that are not yet the result of conversion and yet which result from the failure of the spirit of seriousness. Nihilism, for example, is a "radical disorder", a "disappointed seriousness which has turned back upon itself" that results when one realizes that there are no objective values not grounded in one's own freedom and yet refuses to give one's life meaning though the creative, free choice of values (52ff.). Another example, interesting for my purposes, is the "adventurer", who "is very close to a genuinely moral attitude" in that "he deliberately makes himself a lack of being; he aims expressly at existence" (59). The adventurer fails to be truly moral despite this embrace of ambiguous human freedom, however, because he "remains indifferent to the content, that is, to the human meaning of his action" because he "thinks he can assert his own existence without taking into account that of others" (61). As I will argue later in this chapter and in Chapter 5, in the *Notebooks* Sartre too becomes increasingly interested in the idea that the genuine ethical life involves an interdependency of freedoms, or as Beauvoir puts it, "the bond of each man with all others" (70).
the world that constitutes the context of human life. Though Sartre does suggest in the
*Notebooks* that the free choice of the individual plays a role in bringing about conversion,
he heavily stresses that both the move to ethics and ethical choices themselves are
inevitably "historical":

> Existential ontology is itself historical. There is an initial event, that is, the appearance of the For-itself through a negation of being. Ethics must be historical: that is, it must find the universal in History and must grasp it in History. (6)

In claiming that both the appearance of the for-itself and ethics must be "historical",
Sartre sets boundaries on the role and power of freedom, while at the same time
attempting to defend the claim that the for-itself, unlike the in-itself, is not determined by history.

In order to explain the relation between freedom and history, I should first note that the tortured rejection of Hegel's effort to describe history as a totality is a recurrent motif in the *Notebooks*. This fact signals both Sartre's increasing interest in Marxist ideas and, more importantly, his desire to defend and clarify the account of freedom and human action that he presented in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre rejects the notion that history is a total and totalizing explanation of world events because he clearly sees that such an account fails to allow for individual freedom and agency. Thus in a section entitled "The Ambivalence of History and the Ambiguity of the Historical Fact", Sartre notes:

> Existentialism against History through the affirmation of the irreducible individuality of the person . . . Action of manners, customs, religion, ideology, etc. -- in short, the objective Spirit. Do not forget that every consciousness however inert and drifting is outside of them. (25-26)
Qua existentialist, Sartre is concerned to defend the individual against the attempt to understand persons as mere parts of a system that could predict, and perhaps determine, their actions. Human beings, he explains, stand outside history; each is an "ahistorical absolute" whose free activity creates history (26, cf. 24).

Nevertheless, though Sartre rejects the attempt to describe history absolutely as an absolute "totality", "ideal continuity", "repetition", or "the Spirit", his position on the relation between freedom and history is much more moderate than one might expect from the supposedly vehement defender of absolute freedom who wrote Being and Nothingness. Though each human being is an "ahistorical absolute", writes Sartre, he is at the same time a "historical being"; though a free action introduces "chance" and "discontinuity" into history, it exists by being "taken up from the outside" and becoming part of history (Ibid.). Thus on the one hand free action poses a problem for the System: how can this absolute totality explain freedom that disrupts and challenges the supposedly indomitable course of history? On the other hand, however, history challenges the pretentions of freedom: why and how is it that ostensibly free actions always appear as historical actions -- i.e., actions in time that stem from physical and spiritual causes and which end by constituting history rather than destroying it?

Sartre's response is simply to note and allow this "ambiguity" of history: "Freedom constitutes History by creating the concrete and absolute endurance of nonrepetition. But it kills History by being able to deny it at any instant" (28).

Admittedly, this approach is in part Hegelian: freedom creates history because it incorporates it and conserves it in every surpassing (Cf., e.g., 26). However, what might appear to be a nouveau dialectic involves, according to Sartre, "a real discontinuity":

155
Nonhistory in History: the fact of the scission of consciousness, the general, repetition, chance as an encounter, and, in one sense, freedom . . . It is freedom that makes History but it is also freedom that makes nonhistory. (27)

Sartre struggles here to articulate an "impossible synthesis": freedom sustains history precisely by denying that history constitutes an ultimate constraint; free beings create and re-create what is by participating in their situation (*Ibid.*).  

There is no need to comment extensively here on the relation between Sartre and Hegel in order to appreciate Sartre's concern for the "dialectic" of freedom and "history". What is most important for my purposes is to emphasize that freedom in the *Notebooks* is tied up with the paths that it traverses across the historical landscape of values, essences, and states of affairs that it did not choose. To be sure, this is not a point to which Sartre was completely insensitive in *Being and Nothingness* -- hence his lengthy discussions of the "situation" of freedom in Part IV of the work. My "situation" according to Sartre involves

my place, my body, my past, my position in so far as it is already determined by the indications of Others, finally my *fundamental relation to the Other*. (*BN* 629)

Together, these establish an inescapable context within which a free for-itself chooses its being. The for-itself can accept aspects of its situation or reject them, but since rejection involves acknowledgment, the for-itself cannot completely escape or re-make its situation. As Sartre famously explains, one's given situation forms a "coefficient of

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9 At one point in the *Notebooks*, Sartre suggests that the for-itself creates history not only through its activity but also in virtue of arising as free consciousness: "The appearance of the For-itself is properly speaking the irruption of History in the world" (11). The idea here seems to be that the very existence of history as such requires free consciousness. This thesis makes sense precisely because the course of history, which constrains and places demands on the choices and activities of free beings, is nevertheless constituted by those choices and activities.
adversity" that challenges free projects (628). Freedom, he claims, does not determine its own existence and is therefore "originally a relation to the given" (625). The given, or situation, of freedom is not its cause, reason, necessary condition, or indispensable matter, but rather "the in-itself nihilated by the for-itself which has to be it"; since some aspect of the in-itself must be accepted or surpassed in every decision, the in-itself is inevitably taken up by and bound together with the for-itself's free choices (626).

Sartre's readers can be forgiven, however, if they sense some ambiguity regarding the objectivity and potency of the limitations posed by the situation of freedom. As early critics pointed out, the account in Being and Nothingness seems to make the facts of the situation too dependent on an individual's purely subjective apprehension. According to Sartre, the situation poses "no obstacle in an absolute sense"; rather, "the obstacle reveals its coefficient of adversity across freely invented and freely acquired techniques" (628). Indeed, Sartre seems to suggest in Being and Nothingness that the "residuum" of the in-itself that forms this "resisting world" might, if we were only more clever or easygoing, be avoided (620, 621). This comes across particularly clearly in his example of the crag and the climber:

Here I am at the foot of this crag which appears to me as 'not scalable.' This means that the rock appears to me in the light of a projected scaling . . . Thus the rock is carved out on the ground of the world by the effect of the initial choice of my freedom. But on the other hand, what my freedom can not determine is whether the rock 'to be scaled' will or will not lend itself to scaling. This is part of the brute being of the rock. Nevertheless the rock can show its resistance to the scaling only if the rock is integrated by freedom in a 'situation' of which the general theme is scaling. For the simpler traveler who passes over this road and whose free project is a pure aesthetic ordering of the landscape, the crag is not revealed either as scalable or not-scalable; it is manifested only as beautiful or ugly.
Thus it is impossible to determine in each particular case what comes from freedom and what comes from the brute being of the for-itself. (BN 627)

One way to read this passage is to think that Sartre is pointing out that I notice elements of my situation only because of the free choices that I make. For example, the crag may be beautiful, but the climber is unlikely to notice this since he is focused on whether or not it can be scaled. If this is what Sartre means, however, why is it "impossible to determine what comes from freedom" as opposed to what comes from the situation that resists or aids a free project? Surely we are capable of understanding that our pursuits may alter our perception of the crag's qualities. If so, then it only makes sense to presume that we are also capable of attempting to improve our perception of things by reflecting on our biases and imaginatively considering things from another point of view. At the very least we should be able to refrain from presuming that our perception is complete and impartial.

Sartre's assertion that it is "impossible to determine what comes from freedom" suggests a different, alternate reading of the passage: I do not merely notice elements of my situation because of my free projects; rather, I make those elements what they are. This interpretation garners support from claims like the following:

For the lawyer who has remained in the city and who is pleading a case, whose body is hidden under his lawyer's robe, the rock is neither hard nor easy to climb; it is dissolved in the totality 'world' without in any way emerging from it. (BN 628)

Neverthelesss, while Sartre does hold that the for-itself makes the situation in which it finds itself, he does not advocate wholesale subjectivism. As the second half of this quotation suggests, the way in which a conscious being creates his situation should be
understood in the same way that consciousness, for a phenomenologist, can be said to create or constitute the 'world' in which it lives. Things, qualities, and situations appear as what they are only in and through a consciousness that apprehends them, but we avoid solipsism by remembering in turn that consciousness is what it is only through its awareness of the world. There is consciousness only amidst a situation, and, since Sartre unites freedom and conscious life under the umbrella of the for-itself, "there is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom" (629).

Sartre's public and publicized support for the absolute character of freedom -- the idea that freedom creates its own situation -- was likely a key reason why his discussion of the limits posed by freedom's situation was underappreciated by some of his initial readers. His early defender and friend, Francis Jeanson, notes that varying interpretations of Sartre on freedom and values made up "the basic drama between Sartre and his critics, be they detractors or advocates" (Jeanson 14). "Certain appearances aside, though", writes Jeanson,

we hold that Sartre's 'freedom' simply refers to human freedom as opposed to the determinism of the thing. However, this freedom to which we are 'condemned' must be made our own or else it too will soon appear as yet another determinism. (Ibid.)

In Notebooks for an Ethics, Sartre himself asserts that he has been misunderstood on this point and attempts to clarify matters:

This signifies: 'We are condemned to be free.' This has never really been understood. However it is the basis of my ethics. Let us start from the fact that man is-in-the-world. That is, at the same time a facticity surrounded by the world and a project that surpasses it. As project, he assumes his situation in order to surpass it. Here we come close to Hegel and Marx: aufheben is to preserve in surpassing. Any surpassing that does not preserve is just a flight into the abstract.
I cannot get rid of my situation as bourgeois, Jew, etc. except by assuming it in order to change it. And conversely I can preserve in myself certain 'states' or 'qualities' of which I am proud only by surpassing them in order to preserve them, that is, not by preserving them as such (dead virtues) but by making of them perpetually new hypotheses aiming at a new future. (NE 431)

This passage is perhaps one of Sartre's clearest explanations of the relation between freedom and the situation. Freedom, on his account, is not free to recreate the world at godlike whim, or as though the world were a blank slate. Free persons that choose and act only by engaging and thereby preserving the situation of the world as it is. Here as before, Sartre makes conceptual use of Hegelian dialectic in order to describe the intrinsic limitations of freedom and correct the impression that his notion of freedom entails a problematic subjectivism or relativism. The free individual chooses from among possibilities that present themselves as a result of certain contexts or "state[s] of being" (432).

Thus, continues Sartre, "freedom is a form of condemnation" because I am constrained to accept a situation that "is not my fault", even if I do so only in order to change it; insofar as the horizon of my choices comes from beyond me, I must "take responsibility for what I am not responsible for" (433). Sartre's language is, at this point, remarkably (pre-)Levinasian. Certainly the idea of external demands that inescapably direct my activity and make me "responsible" for things I did not choose is an idea that Levinas develops at great length. Unlike Levinas, however, Sartre does not emphasize the limitations and demands placed on the free individual without also mentioning the power of freedom. This power is not only a capacity to reject and re-interpret the limitations posed by one's situation but also to respond to them ethically. Ethical freedom involves, it seems, a balancing act between accepting one's situation and working to improve it:
So there is something true in an ethics that places the greatness of man in his acceptance of the inevitable and of destiny. But such an ethics is incomplete, for destiny has to be assumed so as to change it. It is not a question of adapting oneself to one's illness, of installing oneself in it, but of living according to norms in order to remain a man. (433)

If ethics involves accepting destiny and working to change it, then freedom can no longer be thought of along the lines of willful self-assertion and protective isolationism that often characterize the for-itself in Being and Nothingness.

3.3 History, concrete ethics, and the Other

In the previous section, I suggested that the limitations imposed on freedom by the "situation" are, in the Notebooks, often explained in terms of "history", that path of world events created and sustained by the activity of free, conscious beings, which both constrains free choice and opens possibilities for a for-itself. Sartre uses this account of history to develop his claim that ethics must aim at the "concrete" rather than the "abstract". An "abstract" ethics, according to Sartre, is one that attempts to determine the good and prescribe right action apart from any reference to the situation in which a free individual finds himself. "There is", claims Sartre,

no abstract ethics. There is only an ethics in a situation and therefore it is concrete. An abstract ethics is that of the good conscience. It assumes that one can be ethical in a fundamentally unethical situation. Ethics is the surpassing of this situation. But in surpassing this situation it preserves it. (17)

Here Sartre enlists the dialectical notion of surpassing a situation while preserving it in order to describe the way in which ethical activity finds itself inextricably tied to the concrete contexts in which it is carried out. The attempt to define what makes an action
or an individual good can be successful only when one pays attention to the ways in which that individual accepts and transforms his situation. There can be no strict division between the free for-itself and the situation that his conscious activity helps to sustain; hence, there is no independent "good conscience" or good will that can be considered good apart from its effects. While Sartre usually uses the term "ethics" in order to refer to "the theory of action" or the relation between action and values, he occasionally uses it to refer to the particular sort of misguided ethical theory that focuses on the abstract:

Ethics is the idea that one can be good without changing the situation; in short, "everything else being equal." It is the idea that one can "have one's conscience for oneself." Ethics is therefore disinterested when it is abstract. It is a way of withdrawing one's poker from the fire. *(Ibid.*)

Hence the idea that ethics must be concrete means that the good man is not one who preserves his own conscience through good intentions or by refusing to act or engage in messy, imperfect, and partially evil situations. Real, historical situations are the context within which free choices are made, and these involve concrete evils that must be accepted in order to be defeated.

The idea that ethics must be concrete also means that the ethical expectations and demands that we place on individuals rightly depend on the understandings of a situation that they have. As an example of this point, Sartre claims that a 20th century French citizen and a 13th century French noble may legitimately be expected to adhere to different codes of ethics. These different ethical codes may depend, for example, on the former's idea of nationhood or the latter's conception of rule by divine right:

I expect it of a Frenchman that he should refuse to collaborate in 1940. I am much less sure in the case of a nobleman in the thirteenth century. The idea of one's
country is not so clear, and the noble, after all, is faithful to rule by divine right, which men to whom he does not grant the right of producing a government (since this is exactly what is in question) have just overthrown. (NE 7)

Insofar as it suggests that ethical obligations -- here, the obligation to defend France against illegitimate rule, and, more importantly, to protect French Jews from genocide -- are not a priori, universal duties, the specter of relativism haunts this sort of example. The specter also lurks menacingly around Sartre's claim a few pages later:

Man is the source of all good and all evil and judges himself in the name of the good and evil he creates. Therefore a priori neither good nor evil. (17)

A clearer look at Sartre's position, however, will dispel the ghostly shadows. In the example of the two Frenchmen, Sartre does not propose that one's duty depends on whether one chooses to accept such-and-such a duty, or whether one accepts an interpretation of the world according to which this duty is binding. Rather, the point that Sartre makes is that "the ethical demand" is not addressed to an "abstract universal" but rather to a "concrete universal" -- "[t]hat is, those men who find themselves in the same historical situation" (7). That is, while there is no abstract moral norm that demands that the 20th century French citizen refuse to collaborate, his position amidst his historical situation turns out to be a legitimate ground of norms. This situation reveals itself to him as a concrete and externally-determined web of persons, things and events that he is able to modify only to a limited extent. More importantly, the situation includes and imposes on him certain ethical principles, which demand to be obeyed and which he cannot ignore, regardless of the fact that the situation of the 13th century noble may not have generated such principles. Hence the 20th century Frenchman, given his situation, ought
not to collaborate; we can "expect it of" him that he refuse. Accordingly, the fact that ethics is and ought to be "concrete" doesn't imply that ethical demands are chosen by a particular individual, but rather that they are addressed to a historical universal: "Ethics must be historical: that is, it must find the universal in History and must grasp it in History" (6).

The claim that the "concrete universal" is the one to whom ethical demands are addressed brings us back to Sartre's account of pure reflection and, at long last, to his account of the Other. This is because we discover the concrete, historical universal and our place as a free agent in relation to the universal through our relations with others. This is so in three ways: First, we require the aid of others in order to comprehend ourselves authentically through pure reflection. Second, the other persons with whom we share our historical situation determine along with us the values that are expressed in ethical demands. Lastly, my engagement with the Other enables me to become what Sartre calls "creative", or to "create" myself and the world through real, historical work, which turns out to be the stuff of ethical activity. Let me explain each of these three ways in which the Other is important for conversion and the elucidation of the concrete universal in turn.

First, according to Sartre, the Other is both a challenge and a necessary aid to pure reflection. The Other is a challenge insofar as he negates my subjectivity and comprehends me as an object; here we are on the familiar territory surveyed in Being and Nothingness. According to Sartre, the objectification of my subjectivity by the Other explains why pure reflection, "made possible by impure reflection . . . does not occur at least half of the time" (NE 11). The problem is that in pure reflection I cannot "dissipate"
the object that I am for the Other, as I do with the "quasi object" or ego-self formed in
impure reflection (Ibid.). Neither can I incorporate the Other's account of me qua object
within my self-understanding, since the Other's account is false insofar as it denies my
subjectivity. What is needed to overcome the objectification of the Other is the Other's
good will and assistance:

[It]n pure reflection there is already a summons to transform the other into a pure,
free subjectivity, so that the scission may be suppressed. Only, what is required is
that the other also do this, which is never given and can only be the result of
chance. For his bad will is fate for me and his good will chance, since he is free.
(Ibid.)

Hence when I begin to engage in pure reflection I experience an emotional or cognitive
"summons"; I understand that I must engage with the Other not merely as another object
in my world but as a free subjectivity. If I do so, I will be able to understand better my
own position as a self-determining for-itself who is nevertheless a situated, historical
being. Alternately, as Sartre sometimes puts it, I will be able to reflect on myself
simultaneously from the "inside" and the "outside" (Cf., e.g., NE 4). Importantly, my own
best attempts to overcome impure reflection and understand the relation between my
freedom and history can fail if the free Other refuses to acknowledge my freedom and
thereby enforces a "scission" between my subjectivity and my objectivity. The efficacy of
pure reflection, and hence the success of conversion, is ensured only through the good
will of the Other who enables me to consider and challenge his view of me as an object;
in good will, he enables me to incorporate and overcome the limitations of his look.
Hence pure reflection succeeds when the Other agrees to abandon the relations of conflict
described in Being and Nothingness -- a situation Sartre calls the "Hell of passions" in the
... and engage instead in a project of mutual understanding (NE 499). By holding that the good will of the Other is a condition for pure reflection, and hence for authentic self-understanding, Sartre clearly suggests that a certain type of relation with the Other is required in order for me to understand myself appropriately as a free, historical agent.

A second, more direct way in which the Other helps me to understand myself and the obligations my situation places on me is though the role that he plays in fixing values. As in Being and Nothingness, Sartre in the Notebooks rejects the "serious" account of values, according to which values are objective, transcendent goods that I know or encounter but do not choose. In the Notebooks, Sartre holds that values stem neither from a Platonic heaven nor from a consciousness that transcends mine, but rather exist only as they are chosen by an individual and expressed within his projects. Nevertheless, although values do not stem from a transcendent nature or consciousness, neither do they stem from my personal "whims" or "caprice". To the contrary, Sartre writes in an

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10 In Chapter 2 I already touched on Sartre's claims regarding the significance of the Other's perspective for one's own self-understanding -- see Chapter 2, §1.2.

11 In Being and Nothingness Sartre associated the "spirit of seriousness" with the idea that values are "transcendent givens independent of human subjectivity" (BN 796). In the Notebooks, however, he associates this position with the idea that values are given either by some other consciousness or as a part of human nature:

Values are not Platonic things In-themselves for the spirit of seriousness. They are posited by a consciousness that is not mine, and that oppresses me. Nature in me is myself as a transcended objectivity for another. (NE 8)

Interestingly, the idea that values are "posited by" an alternate consciousness, or that they are part of my nature, does seem to suggest that they are not given "independent of human subjectivity". Still, it is not clear that this passage is meant to correct Sartre's earlier position. We might understand it instead as a clarification: for someone who takes the "serious" approach, values do appear to him to transcend human subjectivity, or free consciousness, perhaps because the "consciousness that is not mine" appears to be divine or because his own human nature seems to come from a super-human source. However we choose to interpret the passage, what is clear is that Sartre rejects this account of values and asserts that values are not "objectivity" (Ibid.).
appendix to the *Notebooks*, “[t]he notion of the Good demands the plurality of consciousnesses and even the plurality of commitments” (557). In this passage, Sartre argues that the good has a "universal structure", which means that values and obligations must be imagined as holding not only for me but also for all Others. This universal structure

is necessary as that which gives [the Good] its transcendence and its objectivity. To posit the Good in doing it is to posit Others as having to do it. We cannot escape this. Thus, to conclude, it is concrete subjectivity (the isolated subject or the group, the party) that has to do the Good in the face of others, for others, and in demanding from the diversity of others that they do it too. (*Ibid.*)

Sartre claims here that the good -- i.e., good acts, or things that we value -- is necessarily the type of thing that we will for others, both insofar as we demand that they respect the good and because our good acts are done among and for others. This does not mean that everyone must agree about the good in order for values truly to exist. On the contrary, concrete subjectivities pursuing the good find themselves "in the world amidst other hostile or merely diversely oriented subjectivities" (*Ibid.*). Hence, claims Sartre, the universality of the good is "not de facto" but "de jure"; hence its "reality" is that "of 'having-to-be-done'" (*Ibid.*).

In the passage quoted above, Sartre remarkably suggests that the good acquires a sort of *objectivity* through its universal structure. Indeed, this objectivity is at the root of its normative force, since, according to Sartre, the good's "reality of 'having-to-be-done'" depends on the fact that "it has at present, for each concrete subjectivity, an outside" (*Ibid.*). These comments are striking given Sartre's rejection of the "spirit of seriousness", the assumption that values are transcendent objective norms. The tension can only be
resolved by noting that the objectivity that the good acquires in virtue of its universal structure is not the same as the transcendent objectivity of values that would be imposed on human subjectivity from a source beyond it. As Sartre suggests earlier in the *Notebooks*, value is "my goal for the other"; hence, it is through my subjectivity that it becomes an objective "fact" for the other and vice versa:

Value: my goal for the other. It is what my freedom wants, become a fact for the Other . . . But this fact is still structured as something that ought-to-be since this ought-to-be appears to me as a fact. This being-that-ought-to-be is what value is. Or rather I learn from the Other what my fact is for the Other and I look at my project with another's eyes: a value. Or it is the Other (lord, prince, father) who makes me adopt his project, so this project of a freedom, becoming a constraining fact for me, takes on the structure of a value. (449-450)

Again, the objectivity and normativity of value are tied together tightly, but neither relies on a transcendent source, such as God or a transcendent human nature. Rather, values are defined by a reciprocal imposition and adoption of projects between myself and another person. In taking on his projects and sharing mine with him, the act or end that the other wills as a good becomes for me a value that can tell me what ought to be or what I ought to do. Meanwhile, my choice of the good, or what my freedom wants, becomes a value insofar as it becomes the other's goal. Hence the values defined by my projects become "oughts" for the detotalized totality of persons that constitute Sartre's concrete universal through an exchange of goals and projects between myself and concrete others.

Alternately, our participation in common projects wherein our choices and goals are genuinely shared can also play a role in defining objective values.

This leads us to the third way in which relations with others play a role in defining the concrete universal and the historical context of ethics: the activity whereby the for-
itself projects itself and its values necessarily involves engagement with other free individuals. The necessarily communal side of concrete activity means that my "creation" in the world must involve generosity and sharing in the projects of others. In general, Sartre uses the term "creation" broadly in order to describe the free activity of the for-itself.\(^{12}\) The examples of creation Sartre uses tend to be instances of concrete and often artistic work (e.g., painting and building). The significance of creation and human creativity, however, goes beyond the concrete effects of these activities; human creation on Sartre's account has a metaphysical significance since it "necessarily implies objectification" (128). In fact, free activity is always creative precisely because by acting in some determinate way, for some particular end, the for-itself makes its own goal or purpose objective.\(^{13}\) Hence, creation might be best thought of as the process whereby the for-itself establishes its being and determines the world out of indeterminate, static being-in-itself\(^{14}\) -- or, rather, this process is the meaning of the concrete creative activity that the for-itself performs. In the *Notebooks* Sartre explores the notion of "creation" extensively; unfortunately, here I will only scratch the surface, focusing only on the way in which relations with others are both a source and by-product of creativity.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre tends to stress the ontological structure of the creative process whereby the for-itself establishes itself in the world. In order to outline

\(^{12}\) Cf. *NE* 122: "All action is creation. Creation of the world, of myself, and of man." Also, "all action is originally creation" (508).

\(^{13}\) Man grasps himself as a creative being through reflection, both accessory and pure (Cf. *NE* 508). Since human activity can be performed more or less reflectively, there seems to be no requirement that the for-itself understand that it is creative, nor that it understand the metaphysical significance of its creativity.

\(^{14}\) Again, cf. 122: "Man's action is the creation of the world, but the creation of the world is the creation of man."
his ethics in the *Notebooks*, Sartre turns toward the concrete activity of creation, since "concrete ethics . . . is like the logic of effective action" (103). Sartre distinguishes man's effective, concrete creative activity from the activity of absolute creation that is traditionally attributed to God, explaining that man "create[s] what is" while God "would create what is not" (484). Creating what is -- that is, forming and freely acting upon the world -- "preserves all Being's transcendence" and presumably avoids the attempt to ground one's own being that is a part of the *causa sui* project (*Ibid.*). In the passage in which Sartre describes man's creation as the creation of what is, he asserts but does not explain that "this creative assumption of Being and of myself must necessarily be fulfilled in a relation to Others" (*Ibid.*).15

The idea behind Sartre's claim that creation must be fulfilled in relation to others seems to be that, after conversion, I can no longer shape my world as I do by opposing the freedom of others and vying for power but must rather shape it with and through others. Remember that conversion is the process whereby we understand ourselves as both interiority and exteriority -- i.e., as subjectivity and objectivity, as freedom and in situation. In his discussions of creation, Sartre makes it clear that the perspective of the Other regarding my activity in the world is necessary for me to understand fully my objectivity. According to Sartre, my concrete creation, or work in the world, is always a "commitment in the world", a "me outside of myself" because it "represents me" (*NE* 121). In work, I create or make something and through this process I can come to understand myself better because I, *qua* "interiority", understand myself through my

15 In fact, Sartre claims that he "shall say later how" this occurs (484). Unfortunately, he doesn't. Again, a while later, he writes, "Later we shall work out the essential relation of creation to *Mitsein*" -- another empty promise (540).
creation, which is a mirror in "exteriority" (Ibid.). The mirror is, to be sure, not perfect, but it provides an individual with a certain "alienated image of himself" (Ibid.). The other's point of view on my work, however, complicates the picture. According to Sartre, the exteriority of work depends on the willingness of the other to recognize it and to recognize me as responsible for it:

[W]ork has to be recognized and given a value by the Other. In reality, it takes place only through and for the other. The other's agreement is necessary, if only to confer its exteriority on it. (Ibid.)

My need for the other's recognition can be a source of conflict if the other and I cannot mutually acknowledge the freedom of one another; such is the case before conversion. Even after conversion, however, the fact that I understand myself only through the other can be alienating. It means that I must depend on the other's "unpredictable freedom" (Ibid.). Further, since the exteriority of my work depends on the other, I am forced to cede my creativity to him because it is his decision that makes my work real. He "steals" my creation and, "since my character is nothing other than the actual relation of my choice to my work, the other's theft is the theft of my character" (Ibid.).

There is, however, another way in which the other can make my creation and creativity objective. Later in the Notebooks, Sartre suggests that when I come to share in the struggles of others -- i.e., when I take up their work as mine and expect mine to be shared by them -- then I can enter into a loving relationship with the other that enables me to realize myself as both subjectivity and objectivity. In this passage, Sartre begins by noting that an outcome of another person's projects may appear to that other as a result of fate, even when I see, from my perspective, that the outcome was the result of his good or
poor efforts, his ignorance or his skill. This allows Sartre to introduce the idea that I can "unveil" the other, seemingly because I understand his activity in the world better than he does (505). In "unveiling" the Other, I reveal the unforeseen ways that he and his projects are threatened by his situation; I "witness" to his being and his projects. Although I could simply oppress the other by "surpass[ing] his fundamental project with my own", I may instead recognize that "his fundamental project is an absolute and unconditioned demand on me" (Ibid.) If I respect his project, then I respond to the demand it places on me by choosing to unveil the other and by ordering my own projects according to his projects (Ibid.). In doing so, I come to share in the struggles of another.

When this happens, Sartre suggests, it is because I realize through conversion that my will can only be completed through another. In order to see why this is so, we must remember, as I explained above, that values are defined through shared projects; if I value an end or see some means as a way of bringing about the good, I necessarily will it not only for myself but for others. Hence,

if I have comprehended what a man is and brought about my conversion, I do not just wish that my project should be realized, I wish that it be so by way of this man, that is, through contingency and fragility. My task for me therefore is, since I unveil the being of the project and of the existent, to take this being for an end and to surpass this being of the project by taking it up and surpassing it to the very extent that there is a being. So the being of the Other is my affair. (506)

Strikingly, Sartre asserts here that after conversion I do not simply understand my own existence and projects better. Rather, I actually form different projects, in which I take others as ends, on the basis of my new understanding. Because I understand "what a man

is", other persons no longer function primarily as threatening obstacles to be overcome, but rather as free individuals who can share in my project and whose being concerns me.

As ever, Sartre is concerned to stress that my encounter with and goals for the other after conversion are "concrete". The "project that the authentic man of action pursues", he explains, is not some abstract such as the "good of humanity" but rather the good of a concrete group of persons in a particular situation at a particular time (Ibid.). The concrete particularity of the other who becomes "my affair" is manifested physically, as the body of the other. Sartre holds that the freedom of the other is also manifested in his body, and, remarkably, that this freedom becomes the opening to love. This line of thought begins when Sartre suggestively comments that "this body, this face, this finitude" enable me to grasp the other's "infinity of freedom" (507). This is because "[t]he infinity of points of view that I can assume on this body, on this face" symbolize "the fact that the Other's freedom is always beyond what he is " (Ibid.). The physical Other, a concrete being who manifests himself in new ways through his free activity, is "loveable" in a way that neither pure being nor freedom itself are (Ibid.). Thus, according to Sartre, the other's body "insofar as it is freedom in the dimension of Being" is the appropriate object of love (Ibid.). Distinguishing love from "the desire to appropriate", he writes that it is a sort of unveiling or creation "in pure generosity" wherein "I assume myself as losing myself so that the fragility and finitude of the Other exist absolutely as revealed within the world" (Ibid.). In love, I allow the other's qualities to be realized in the world

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17 Is it an accident that both Sartre and Levinas see in the face of the other an opening to infinite being? There is no need to conflate the two in order to be intrigued by Sartre's singular remarks. Where Levinas sees infinite glory that imposes responsibility on me, Sartre sees infinite freedom that calls me to love.
and allow him to be "for me" a subjectivity, while realizing both my own identity as
subject and object. "Here", Sartre concludes,

is an original structure of authentic love (we shall have to describe many other
such structures): to unveil the Other's being-within-the-world, to take up this
unveiling, and to set this Being within the absolute; to rejoice in it without
appropriating it; to give it safety in terms of my freedom, and to surpass it only in
the direction of the Other's ends. (508)

This passage marks a striking departure from the intersubjective possibilites (conflict)
and ethical meaning (ens causa sui) discussed in Being and Nothingness.

Despite this lovely suggestion that my love for the body of another encourages me
to unveil his being in the world and share in his projects, I should be wary of leaving my
reader with too rosy a picture of the Notebooks. Other persons remain, in the Notebooks,
a possible threat; they "can use the adverse and destructive forces of the world" -- i.e., the
world that they create, re-ordering the in-itself and robbing it of the meanings I impose --
"to destroy me" (NE 333). Since Sartre does not renounce his earlier account but simply
calls it an ontology before conversion, it is to be expected that relations of conflict remain
a possibility in the Notebooks (6). What is special about the Notebooks is its fragmentary
but tantalizing elaboration of conversion. The conversion to pure reflection, as I have
explained, transforms the project of becoming an ens causa sui, reveals and sustains the
dialectic between freedom and history, and re-creates the for-itself as an ethical actor in
relation with others. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will argue that this
metaethical account helps us to focus on the significance that relations with others play in
an ethical life, and on the fact that ethics involves a self-transformation. First, however, I
must turn my attention back to Levinas, who, while unlike Sartre in many respects,
agrees with him that in becoming ethical both my self-advancing projects and my relations with others must be converted.
CHAPTER 4:
LEVINAS' ETHICS: FROM THE FACE TO ETHICS

Diane Perpich has recently suggested that Levinas' work can, and should, be read as "a struggle to say how we come to find ourselves within a moral life at all" (Perpich 2008 12). Here Perpich follows many other readers of Levinas who are cautious, if not downright pessimistic, about the possibility of a "system of moral prescriptions" that could be derived from Levinas' ethics. Perpich's comment might just as easily be applied to Sartre's work in Notebooks for an Ethics, which also focuses on the origins and ontology of moral consciousness rather than on the particular obligations or general ethical laws that direct practical reasoning. As I explained in Chapter 3, Sartre's account of the way in which we find ourselves in "a moral life" focuses on the conversion to pure reflection. In this chapter, I will discuss Levinas' account of the same transition. Unlike Sartre, Levinas' account focuses on the responsibility that confronts me as soon as I encounter another person, and rests on the claim that the face of the Other expresses a "command" that conditions both conscious experience and freedom. In this chapter, I will describe the type of ethical demand that appears when I encounter the Levinasian Other and clarify how it is that this command indicates an "intelligible resistance" rather than a "real impossibility" ("Freedom and Command" 21-22). For Levinas as for Sartre, articulating a proper account of freedom turns out to be the key to understanding why, as Perpich puts it, we "find ourselves within a moral life". Whereas for Sartre, ethical
freedom is freedom tamed by its situation and shared in creative activity with others, for Levinas it is a capacity that the encounter with the Other activates and by means of which I sacrifice my egotistical way of life to respond to his call. As I will show, on this account normativity is 'built in' to the structure of freedom such that for Levinas the good life is a life spent questioning one's self-centered predispositions in pursuit of an Other-centered life of freedom.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the an-archic episode by means of which the Other breaks the enjoyment of the self-satisfied ego and re-constitutes the self as a "hostage", a self that is responsible for the Other. We saw that Levinas describes this responsibility for the Other as a "substitution" for him; by this Levinas means that the I or self is radically passive in its own constitution since constitution just is being called forth by the Other. That is, "[i]n substitution my being that belongs to me and not to another is undone, and it is through this substitution that I am not 'another', but me" (OB 127). In the relation with the Other, inaugurated by the manifestation of his face, egoism is destroyed and the true source of subjectivity -- the self's responsibility for the Other -- is revealed. Despite Levinas' frequent use of the term responsibility, however, it is not at all clear how this account of the an-archically created self is supposed to constitute an ethics, or even a foundation for one. Thus in this chapter I want to leave aside the question of how this encounter gives rise to the self and ask more directly how the encounter gives rise to ethics.

It might be objected that this way of stating the question to be discussed already suggests a mistaken approach to Levinas' philosophy. For Levinas, the self just is an ethical self, such that the an-archic manifestation of the face triggers both subjectivity and
ethics in one single, pre-historic 'event'. This is why Levinas uses ethical terminology such as responsibility, command, freedom, and the good to describe the way in which the Other calls me out of the *il y a*, pulls me out of enjoyment, and disturbs the hospitality of the home. Thus, the objection might go, the question of how the face gives rise to ethics cannot be meaningfully distinguished from the question of how the face gives rise to the self. This objection, however, is not a true challenge, since while it is true that the answers to these two questions are deeply intertwined, it nevertheless remains possible for us to demand of Levinas some account of why or how his ethical terminology is appropriate to the ontological situation he describes. Furthermore, if 'responsibility' for the Other constitutes an ethical self, it nevertheless remains a question what attitudes and choices this ethical self does or must adopt towards the Other. What, in short, does it mean to be 'responsible' for the Other? Nevertheless, the ostensible objection does help us see that any answer to the question of how the face inaugurates ethics will have to appreciate that the face is, for Levinas, *immediately* ethical. That is, there is no mysterious causal link between the face and the responsibility it bestows; this responsibility just is part of what manifests itself as the face.

This observation is, in fact, a first response to the question of how the encounter with the Other gives rise to ethics: *the face is immediately ethical because it constitutes me as responsible for the Other*. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss this first response and endeavor to explain what Levinas means when he asserts that responsibility is immediately bestowed by the encounter with the Other. As I will show later in the chapter, understanding Levinas' account of responsibility depends on appreciating what Levinas means when he claims that the face issues a command, which in turn is helpfully
elucidated by his distinction between the saying and the said in *Otherwise than Being*.

Lastly, in the final section of this chapter I will turn, as already indicated, to the freedom that Levinas claims is created by this command and the normativity that he discovers within that freedom.

4.1 Responsibility, the face, and ur-ethics

At the start of the fourth chapter of *Otherwise than Being* -- the chapter at the heart of his book, entitled "Substitution" -- Levinas asks after the origin of consciousness. When we imagine "[s]ubjectivity qua consciousness", he explains, we envision the self as a knowing subject that grasps beings through "a mysterious operation of schematism" (*OB* 99). In this operation, the subject unifies "the dispersion of aspects and images, silhouettes or phases", organizing experience according to "idealities" -- categorizing them and forming them into objects (*Ibid.*). On this picture, a knowing subject identifies beings' manifestations only by assimilating them to his own concepts, which according to Levinas means that subjectivity qua consciousness is fundamentally a return to oneself. This account, which Levinas rehearses many times in his oeuvre, always leads him to question of how, if at all, we might imagine subjectivity apart from this activity of categorizing and apprehending objects. Is there any way in which subjectivity can encounter meaning that would be revealed pre- or a-categorically, apart from intentional consciousness?

1 Whether the fact that the mode in which the Other affects us is a-categorical means also that this mode is a-conceptual is a question on which I remain neutral (Cf. Chapter 1, note 26). It would be easy to suppose that Levinas' rejection of "all categories" means that no concepts whatsoever are adequate to the mode in which the Other expresses himself, but it would also be easy to suppose, given Levinas'
Levinas, of course, holds that the face of the Other is revealed in this pre-intentional mode, prior to my apprehension of it, and that it is this pre-intentional "face" that enables language, and subjectivity qua consciousness. In Chapter 2 I discussed the network of terms Levinas introduces at the start of "Substitution" in order to describe this situation. This network includes proximity, trace, obsession, and persecution -- all terms that Levinas uses to stress the non-intentional character of the relation with the Other and the passivity of the subject in this encounter. These, however, are not the only important terms that Levinas introduces in the first few pages of this chapter. In particular, he further elaborates the special way in which the face is encountered by introducing a key ethical term: responsibility.

Responsibility, according to Levinas, answers an important question regarding the encounter with an Other -- namely, the question of how this encounter is possible.

Toward the end of the first section of Chapter 4, Levinas asks,

How in consciousness can there be an undergoing or a passion whose active source does not, in any way, occur in consciousness? (102)

A few lines later, he answers,

It is in a responsibility that is justified by no prior commitment, in the responsibility for another -- in an ethical situation -- that the [meta]-ontological (méta-ontologique) and metalogical structure of this anarchy takes form, undoing the logos in which the apology by which consciousness always regains its self-control, and commands, is inserted. (Ibid.)

willingness to use concepts to describe the Other, that this ground of all intelligibility can in fact be itself described. At any rate, Levinas' main point in describing the unique way in which the Other affects me is not to claim that this encounter is thoroughly a-conceptual, but rather to insist that the Other reveals himself with a unique phenomenality all his own, which is different from the phenomenality of intentional consciousness in which objects, facts, and events present themselves.
Thus "responsibility" enters the discussion as a label for the basic structure in which intentional consciousness is disturbed; to put it another way, the ethical situation is the principle beyond being from which flows schematized, known being. In drawing attention to this claim, I do not mean to suggest that this single sentence contains Levinas' complete answer to the question of how the self can find itself in a non-intentional relation to someone or something. Rather, what I want to suggest is that while it is true to a certain extent that ethical responsibility is, for Levinas, revealed in the face, it is just as much true that the face is revealed in ethical responsibility. As Levinas describes it here, 'responsibility' already includes the idea of a pre-intentional relation, a relation between the self and a term that it neither assimilates nor creates through its own spontaneity. This is why it is able to answer the question of how a pre-intentional relation is possible.

The organization of reasoning at the start of Levinas' chapter may strike us as a bit surprising. Levinas does not, ostensibly, set out to explain ethics or give an account the basis of moral rules. Instead, he begins by proposing the possibility that subjectivity, or selfhood, cannot be fully reduced to conscious, intentional experience. Then, facing the insurmountable challenge of describing that which explicitly falls outside the bounds of conscious apprehension, he endeavors to describe what pre-intentional experience would be like. Sensibility "not as a knowing but as proximity" would be the general mode of this experience, which occurs "without the mediation of any principle, any ideality", and is thus best described as "a relationship" rather than an awareness of something (100). As he describes the realm of the pre-intentional, Levinas begins to suggest that a relationship between myself and another person might correspond to this sort of relationship. This model only applies, however, so long as we do not envision it as a relation between two
consciousnesses or two knowers; it is "not the inoffensive relationship of knowing in which everything is equalized" (100).

What sort of relation can be envisioned in this way? Levinas' answer is, of course, an ethical relation; thus Levinas arrives at ethics, and endeavors to explain it, as part of an inquiry into the limits and 'otherwise' of consciousness. The possibility of a subjectivity other than consciousness can be imagined as "an assignation of me by another, a responsibility with regard to men we do not even know"; in the idea of "assignation" we have a "formula" that "expresses a way of being affected which can in no way be invested by spontaneity" (100, 101). Further, while Levinas does not explicitly provide an argument that there is pre-intentional experience as such, by asserting that this relationship with the other "concretely corresponds to [the] description" of a pre-intentional sensibility, he evidently takes it that the ethical relationship provides evidence that there really is such pre-intentional subjectivity (100). The fact that we do encounter ethical obligations, or do experience an assignation of responsibility that does not stem from our own spontaneity, is both evidence that supports the hypothesis of pre-intentional subjectivity and, therefore, a remarkable datum that calls for analysis even as it resists conceptualization.

Paying attention to Levinas' order of reasoning helps us to see that ethics and ethical language are, for Levinas, as much an answer to questions regarding subjectivity and the limits of intentional consciousness as they are objects of inquiry themselves. "Responsibility" appears as the answer to a question about how passive subjectivity is possible because, Levinas proposes, we readily imagine and actually experience that responsibility is prima facie evidence of passive subjectivity. Responsibility is, at root,
not derived from our own consciousness of the world; moral obligation is not the outcome of reasoning applied to experience. In short, what is demanded of me is demanded *of* me, not *by* me. This is why the assignation of responsibility is a perfect exemplar of a relation in which I remain purely passive. As Levinas explains,

> The ethical language we have resorted to does not arise out of a special moral experience, independent of the description hitherto elaborated. . . . The tropes of ethical language are found to be adequate for certain structures of the description: for the sense of the approach in its contrast with knowing, the face in its contrast with a phenomenon. (120)

To be sure, Levinas' use of ethical language is not purely instrumental; he is interested *both* in exploring the possibility of non-intentional subjectivity and in providing an account of ethics. Nevertheless, the account of ethics that Levinas is interested in giving is determined by his primary focus on the role that ethical experience plays in the fundamental ontology of subjectivity and his analysis of it. This is no doubt why Levinas sometimes suggests that his philosophy is not ethics at all. In the extended interview with Philippe Nemo published as *Ethics and Infinity*, he famously remarks:

> My task does not consist in constructing ethics; I only try to find its meaning. . . . One can without doubt construct an ethics in function of what I have just said but this is not my own theme. (90)

(Here, "what I have just said" refers to a brief summary of Levinas' thought on the face and justice.) Along the same lines, Levinas occasionally draws a distinction between the "ethical situation" that he describes and "ethics", where the latter would seem to indicate a theory of rules, obligations, and/or values. For example, to return to the section of *Otherwise than Being* that I have been discussing: "The ethical situation of responsibility is not comprehensible on the basis of ethics" (120). "Ethics" in this context is a theory of
justice, or a description of rules and obligations that are incurred once individuals come
together in a community of three or more, forming a network of interpersonal relations
that are nevertheless, according to Levinas, basically impersonal.²

The reason that Levinas resists the suggestion that he is constructing an ethics, as
well as the idea that his account of responsibility would be a part of an ethical theory, is
that he employs ethical language first and foremost to explain a structure of subjectivity
that is not at all like the rational agency of traditional ethical theory. The moral agent for
a philosopher such as Kant or Mill is a conscious self who exercises practical reason,
considers obligations from an idealized impartial standpoint, and deliberates between
alternative courses of action. If the "ethical situation" of responsibility is for Levinas the
paradigmatic example of a pre-intentional sensibility, it clearly cannot be imagined in a
similar way; hence, as Levinas suggests, his "ethical situation" should not be confused
with the obviously conscious and intentional deliberation typically described in theories
of ethics. For him, the "ethical situation" is not a situation in which I face some moral
quandary. It is not the universalizable situation of an autonomous, rational lawgiver nor
the calculated balance of an individual who acts so as to maximize some good. Rather it
is the absolutely particular situation in which I find myself when an Other presents
himself to me; it is the situation in which I sensibly discover another who needs -- i.e.,
requires -- me to be someone for him.

² Note that Levinas does not consistently distinguish between the "ethical situation" and "ethics" in
this manner, and there are numerous sites in his oeuvre where "ethics" clearly refers to the pre-ontological
situation vis-à-vis the Other. For example: "Ethics is the breakup of the originary unity of transcendental
apperception, that is, it is the beyond of experience" (OB 148).
Nevertheless, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, in his account of the "third" Levinas does attribute an important role to rational deliberation in "ethics". Once there is a plurality of Others -- which there always is -- the self must respond to the Other through deliberation. That is, in this case

Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the visibility of faces, and thus intentionality and the intellect, and in intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a copresence on an equal footing as before a court of justice. (OB 157)

Levinas identifies the move from the "unlimited initial responsibility" that is assigned by the face to the "concern for justice" triggered by the third as the origin of thought and consciousness (OB 128, Cf. 158). Since, as I have just shown, Levinas primarily uses the initial "ethical situation" -- the sensible relation with the Other -- as an example of pre-intentional consciousness, it is safe to say that once we are concerned with justice we are no longer concerned with this ethical situation. Rather to be concerned with justice is to be concerned with ethics, as a theory or mode of living into which our ethical situation with an Other amidst others thrusts us but which tends to lose sight of this original situation.

It is for this reason that Levinas' philosophy is best understood as an ur-ethics, an account of the way in which persons initially become capable of acting ethically rather than an account of the ways in which they do act when they are ethical, or the ways in which they must act in order to be ethical. To put it another way, this is an account of a deep conversion from self-centered existence to a type of consciousness wherein the self becomes capable of responding to the Other. It is in this sense, as I will explain later in
this chapter, that Levinas' account is an account of how the self is endowed with true freedom.

Because, by his own description, Levinas uses ethical language to explain and exemplify the structure of non-intentional subjectivity, it seems he is doing something very different from Sartre. In *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre ostensibly takes up the project of constructing a concrete existentialist ethics. Sartre aims to describe what sort of values bind an individual who is the source of value, and the type of duty that can apply to an absolutely free consciousness. Nevertheless, although Sartre may sometimes imagine his project as the construction of an ethics, he ends up focusing on two main themes that in fact bring him close to Levinas' account of the "ethical situation": (1) the conversion whereby an individual becomes capable of reorienting himself away from the goal of becoming an *ens causa sui* and (2) the nature of real freedom and its dependence on the situation. In assigning such an important role to conversion, Sartre like Levinas bases his ethical theory on a dramatic shift in the individual, a re-orientation of one's fundamental meaning and goals that allows one to engage in ethical activity. What is striking here is that both phenomenologists focus on a moment at the foundation of ethics, a jarring but necessary shift that they locate in the fundamental ontological structure of individuals and which opens the possibility of doing good. That is, they both focus on ur-ethics. Similarly, and as a consequence, both focus on the nature of freedom once it is no longer envisioned as the power of self-absorbed consciousness; regarding this topic, both are concerned to argue that true freedom is fulfilled rather than challenged by the seemingly unearned responsibility with which it is saddled as soon as ethics begins.
In noting these parallels between Sartre and Levinas, I do not mean to suggest that Sartre's account of the event that opens the door to ethics is itself similar to Levinas' account of the same event. Sartrean conversion is evidently an historical event while Levinas claims that the encounter with the transcendent face of the Other is a-historical. Furthermore, Sartre's account of the motives of conversion allows a much greater role to an individual's spontaneity and intentional consciousness than does Levinas' account of the absolutely passive encounter with the face. While the perspective of an Other may help to bring about Sartrean conversion, it is fundamentally a reflective shift that an individual brings about in himself. To the contrary, the event itself by means of which ethics is established for Levinas just is the relation in which the Other shows his face to me. Thus, while both Sartre and Levinas are each in some way engaged in a project of ur-ethics, Sartre's ethical theory remains concerned with concrete, historical situations in which values are chosen and obligations arise while Levinas eschews such discussion in favor of focusing on what he takes to be the an-archic, passive inauguration of ethics.

These brief comparisons and contrasts should help clarify the significance of Levinas' position that the face of the Other constitutes me as responsible for it, and hence that the face is immediately ethical. First of all, this claim places Levinas squarely on the plane of ur-ethics. Duties and values are not derived from the face as though it were some theoretical principle; rather, the face, like Sartrean conversion, is a condition for ethics, an event that interrupts self-centered existence and makes ethical reasoning possible. Secondly, however, by proposing that seeing the face of the Other just is the event that makes me ethically responsible -- i.e., it does not cause or otherwise motivate this event but actually constitutes it -- Levinas proposes an account of ethics' foundations that
strikingly limits the role the individual plays in bringing about ethics. As I will show, this account of ur-ethical structure affects the way Levinas views freedom and ethical consciousness. For example, for Levinas the ethical self is first-and-foremost a self called to respond to the needs of the Other, which suggests that, on the first-order level of ethical reasoning, an individual is never able to ignore, renounce, or completely discharge his obligations to others -- although there may be a multiplicity of ways in which he can pursue justice, or right relationship with others. Compare this to Sartre, for whom the individual for-itself after conversion continues have control over both his fundamental project and the mode in which he realizes it. By contrast, the Levinasian ethical self is always commanded by the face of the Other; thus even our freedom to pursue justice remains a response to an external demand rather than a capacity (or condemnation) that is intrinsic to the human mode of existence.

4.2 A pre-linguistic command

4.2.1 The saying of responsibility

In his mature *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas holds that the face is immediately ethical because the pre-intentional relationship in which it is manifested just is an ethical relation, or a relation wherein my responsibility for the Other is encountered. Over two decades previously, however, Levinas suggested in his essay "Freedom and Command" that the face is immediately ethical because it expresses a particular sort of command. This way of describing the ethical situation is one that he retains and develops throughout his work, and it undergirds the distinction between the "saying" and the "said" in
Otherwise than Being. Before considering that distinction, however, a look at Levinas' earlier essay will be helpful. In "Freedom and Command", Levinas argues that the face's expression is a command insofar as it acts on my will, and that this command inaugurates ethics because it does not challenge my freedom as though it were an external force but rather reveals the true foundation and meaning of my freedom. The essay opens by presenting a dilemma that Levinas draws from the history of philosophy and that Peter Atterton summarizes nicely: "How can a will be commanded to act and remain free? Alternatively, how can a command apply to anything other than a free will?" (Atterton 340). According to Levinas, this quandary has been resolved "[s]ince antiquity . . . by affirming that to command is to be in advance in accord with the will that one commands" ("Freedom and Command" 15). This resolution is possible because reason serves as a link between the command and the free will of the one commanded; reason, according to the tradition, is the order represented in the command and recognized by the free will "because it finds that order in itself" (Ibid.).

Levinas, however, finds this resolution of the dilemma lacking, not because it would be impossible for both the command and the will to be committed to some rational order that thereby establishes a harmony between them, but because, de facto, no such pre-established orders seem able to prevent tyranny, which violates the freedom of the will that is commanded. Lest we think this unease regarding the connection between tyranny and a priori orders that claim to be grounded in reason is merely a result of 20th century political experience, Levinas points out that "Plato's philosophy is as it were obsessed by the threat of tyranny" (16). Tyranny can deprive an individual of his freedom of action, leaving him only with "freedom of thought", which would be his
"consciousness of tyranny" and his rational resistance to it (16-17). More menacingly, tyranny actually "puts reason in distress" using the resources of "love and wealth, torture and hunger, silence and rhetoric"; that is, tyranny robs an individual even of his freedom of thought by transforming him into an "obedient consciousness" or "servile soul" that placidly obeys the tyrant's commands. "That one can create a servile soul", claims Levinas, "is not only the most painful experience of modern man, but perhaps the very refutation of human freedom" (16). In order to protect freedom against tyranny, Levinas asserts, individuals establish a State and various institutions, which constitute an external "order of reason" protected by a written law (17). Freedom, then, produces law by engaging in an exercise of self-defense; freedom "consists in instituting outside of oneself an order of reason" that would be able to distinguish between commands that protect freedom and those that eviscerate it (Ibid.).

Note, however, that if this account is correct, then the relationship between freedom and reason is more complex than the philosophical tradition -- at least as Levinas reads it -- tends to admit. The order of reason that in fact guarantees the agreement of the command with the free will commanded is not an a priori harmony. Rather, what counts as rational is determined by freedom in its attempt to defend itself against tyranny, and the rational order then appears as "an exterior command" precisely because it has been established as such by freedom (Ibid.). Finally, notes Levinas, the free will that establishes a rational order is not thereby bound to that order; to the contrary, we often find that "the commands of written law, the impersonal reason of institutions, despite their origin in free will, become in a certain way alien to the will, which is at every instant renewed" (Ibid.). One might object that the "resistance of the will to its former
decisions" would be "unreasonable", but this is precisely the point; the rational will remains free to re-interpret the meaning of its own rationality:

The possibility of this contradiction of the will with itself, or, more exactly, of the former will with the present will, of the written law with my freedom, is clearly an admission of unreason; but probably one cannot purely and simply identify the will with the order of impersonal reason. (17-18)

Because of this, Levinas concludes that there must be some condition other than impersonal reason that establishes the possibility of a command. Returning to the original quandary, that is, Levinas asserts that if it is possible for a command to be directed at a free will that remains free in accepting the command, it is not, or not merely, because the will recognizes the command as rational.

Instead, Levinas suggests that there is a situation or a relationship that conditions the institution of reason and that therefore serves as the true basis of the harmony between command and free will. He describes this situation as a "direct understanding between individuals", a "discourse before discourse", and "a relationship between particulars prior to the institution of rational law" (18). It will come as no surprise that according to Levinas this pre-rational relationship is constituted by the manifestation of the face of the Other. Here, Levinas claims that the face is "ontologically opposed" to me; "it is", he asserts, "what resists me by its opposition and not what is opposed to me by its resistance" (19). The description here is somewhat different from the way in which Levinas describes this situation in later works but the point is the same: the face is absolutely, infinitely other; its alterity does not depend on some activity of resistance but merely on the fact that it manifests itself as absolutely other.
This relationship with the face is important in "Freedom and Command" because according to Levinas the face, not reason, is the true link between freedom and a command and is the condition of both. The face is the condition of a command because it constitutes an "expression" that "commits us to enter into society" (21). That is to say, some direct experience of another person is the encounter that enables more complex systems of meaning such as language and culture, or what Levinas calls the order of reason (21). Hence this expression is what makes commands within the order of reason possible; more importantly, as a "command prior to institutions" it is also itself an ur-command, an order to become social and to respond to the Other who presents himself. Because the face commands sociality, it is also the condition of freedom, or, as Levinas has it, the opposition of the face "puts my freedom into action" (19). Hence, as an ur-command, the "expression" of the face is what first evokes my ability to respond to the Other. The way in which this birth of freedom occurs is not explicitly explained, but the claim depends on Levinas' position that true freedom is action in accord with an exterior but not tyrannical command. (I will return to this point and discuss Levinas' account of freedom in greater detail in the final section of this chapter.)

In a recent essay, Peter Atterton suggests that there is a circularity in Levinas' argument in "Freedom and Command", which has to do with the claim that an encounter with the Other is the necessary ground of meaning and discourse:

Levinas claims that the Other provides the only nonrational and noncoercive incentive for adopting impersonal reason. The Other does so precisely insofar as he or she is able to obligate the will directly through speech. . . . However, the relation with the Other would then appear to presuppose what it is said first to make possible. (Atterton 344)
The problem here is that on Levinas' account the face supposedly opens the order of reason by means of its expression, which is described as a direct command. This expression, as Atterton points out, must be understood as an obligation placed on the will "directly through speech". This, however, suggests that the speech or expression of the Other is itself is intelligible; that is, it seems to presuppose some order of meaning or reason. As Atterton puts it, "any priority Levinas can be seen to assign to the face-to-face as the indispensable condition for impersonal reason is vitiated by the intelligibility of the logos itself" (Ibid.). According to Atterton, however, this circularity is not a genuine problem for Levinas, who, after all, is trying to describe an encounter that occurs prior to reason. "The antilogy of the account", he points out, "signals the transcendence of the Other, not the failure of reason" (345, Atterton's italics).

Although he does not extensively explore the point, Atterton rightly suggests that Levinas relies on the terms "saying" and "said" in Otherwise than Being in order to resolve this tension and better describe the relation between the primordial expression of the face and the order of reason it peaceably commands. Indeed, the distinction between the saying and the said is perhaps Levinas' best tool for explaining how the face constitutes an ur-command that is both beyond and within, although never subordinate to, the order of freedom, justice, and ethical reasoning. The relation with the Other, the immediate command of the face is, according to Levinas, a saying prior to any said. "Saying", on Levinas' account, is an exchange that creates meaning and a shared world; it can do this because it signifies prior to essence, prior to identification, on the hither side of this amphibology. Saying states and thematizes the said, but signifies it to the other, a
neighbor, with a signification that has to be distinguished from that borne by words in the said. *(OB 45-6)*

One way to understand what Levinas means when he claims that saying signifies "on the hither side of this amphibology" (that is, the "amphibology of being and entities in the said" *[OB] 3) is to see that Levinas' distinction between saying and said is not the difference between a cause, event, or process and the effect or result it brings about; rather, it is a distinction between two different modes of signification. Alternately, one might describe it as a distinction between two different ways in which something is manifested. That which is signified in or as the said is manifest in much the same way that Husserl describes, as the object of intention and observation, which we understand by grasping its properties and essence. In the mode of signification that Levinas calls the said, we 'put together' the appearances of a thing, fitting them into a structure that allows us to represent them and ultimately creating, through a configuration of entities, the meaningful whole we call the world *(OB 46).* The said for Levinas is associated with the order of essence and ontology; things, beings, objects, and essences all show themselves in the mode of the said.

According to Levinas the said "arises in the saying", but saying is not therefore a process by which the said is produced. Rather, while the said is a mode of signification wherein things are presented as beings in a world, objects of intentional acts, or instances of essences, the saying is a mode of signification "on the hither side of ontology":

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3 Being and entities are an amphibology, or an instance of ambiguous discourse, because they truly reveal their essence, in the mode of the said, but there is nevertheless a truth to them that is beyond their essence and that points the way to the saying. As Levinas puts it, "The entities are, and their manifestation in the said is their true essence"; nevertheless, "there is question of the said and being only because saying or responsibility require justice" *(Cf. OB 45).*
Saying signifies otherwise than as an apparitor presenting essence and entities. This is one of the central theses of the present text. (Ibid.)

If the saying is meant to signify without presenting beings, however, we must ask what and how it does signify; as Levinas puts it, "What does saying signify before signifying a said?" The answer is that it signifies nothing -- or, better, if we can forgive a more descriptive word game -- it signifies everything but no thing. Saying signifies 'everything' insofar as it is the necessary correlate of any said; it is an originary showing presupposed in the determinate structure of meanings proper to the said. Nevertheless Levinas insists it is "not exhausted in this manifestation of the said"; in its own right, or apart from its correlation to the said, it is an apophantic mode of signification, or a "modality of the approach to another". Hence if we try to describe saying in itself, we can only say that it signifies without signifying anything; in this sort of manifestation, there is simply pure relation or exchange between persons without anything that is exchanged. Another way of describing this is to observe that the all-important intention of the subject who receives the communication, the intention that enables something to be manifested in the mode of the said, is absent in the saying. This allows Levinas to link together saying with the mode of manifestation wherein the Other reveals himself to me while I remain absolutely passive:

The act of saying will turn out to have been introduced here from the start as the supreme passivity of exposure to another, which is responsibility for the free initiatives of the other. Whence there is an 'inversion' of intentionality . . . There is an abandon of the sovereign and active subjectivity (OB 47)

Thus Levinas brings us back to his central theme: the description of a mode of non-intentional subjectivity, which he discovers in the ethical relation. Saying, a mode of
signification, is used to describe this mode of subjectivity because it captures the idea that the ethical relation between self and other is a special type of communication. This special communication does not rely on shared, previously understood meanings and yet functions as a primordial "exposure" that conditions all other communication, which takes place in the mode of the said (OB 45-47).

By introducing saying as a unique mode of signification Levinas provides another model of the way in which the face and responsibility do not strictly speaking appear but do manifest themselves and reveal their own meaning. The advantage of the saying/said distinction, as opposed to other models Levinas uses to capture the difference between intentional and non-intentional, or ethical, experience (e.g., being vs. beyond being, need vs. Desire, spatiotemporal distance vs. proximity) is that it allows us to take advantage of our intuitive tendency to think of the said as something that presupposes and derives meaning from an act of saying. This idea of a said that derives from a saying helps us to get a handle on Levinas' insistence that discourse, justice, reason and intentional consciousness are all grounded in the pre-intentional, immediately sensible exposure to an Other. To be sure, Levinas resists our also-intuitive tendency to imagine the saying as an activity that brings about the said -- i.e., as the activity of asserting something. Nevertheless he evidently plays on, and plays with, our intuitions about the relationship between 'saying' and what is 'said' when he suggests that the saying is understood through the said and that it is "natural" for the saying to "enter into a proposition and a book" -- i.e., to "assemble itself" into the said (OB 43-44).

Levinas also describes the relation between the saying and the said by claiming that the saying is "an affirmation and a retraction" of the said (OB 44). Here Levinas
wants to emphasize the "miracle of ethics before the light" of intentional consciousness, justice, and rational deliberation -- hence saying is a 'retraction' of the said. Nevertheless he also wants to hold that ethical choices and practical obligations cannot be seen properly without that light. Ethics "must spread out and assemble itself into essence" and "let itself be seen", while "[p]hilosophy makes this astonishing adventure . . . intelligible, by loosening this grip of being" (*Ibid.*). The imagery of saying and said enables Levinas to capture fruitfully both moments of this 'adventure' of ethics. Saying is both prior to the said and yet only always uncovered within it, just as pre-ontological responsibility precedes ethical obligation and deliberation, though we catch sight of responsibility only in and through the ethical life filled with concrete obligations and requiring practical rationality.  

Finally, the distinction between the saying and the said enables us to soothe the tension noted above between the command of the Other and the rational speech it enables as these are described in "Freedom and Command". As I explained earlier, in that essay Levinas holds that reason, or the rational order, is grounded on a free response to the command of an Other. In *Otherwise than Being*, by making the distinction between the saying and the said, Levinas gives himself the tools to mark a difference between the commanding speech of the Other, which occurs in the mode of saying, and the rational discourse that follows on that primordial saying, in the mode of the said. Thus the saying/said distinction provides some reprieve from the circularity noted by Atterton -- i.e., the fact that the pre-rational speech of the Other seems to be inexplicably intelligible.

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4 Note that Levinas explicitly thematizes 'responsibility' as saying: "The responsibility for another is precisely a saying prior to anything said" (*OB* 43).
Now we can say that this speech can constitute a type of communication from the Other to me not because it presupposes a rational order of intelligibility but rather because it just is the ground of such an order, a saying prior to the said.⁵

Thus we have removed one obstacle in the way of understanding Levinas' suggestion that the face of the Other is immediately ethical because it issues a 'command' or direct obligation. Thus far, however, we have only touched briefly on what it is that this command demands of the one to whom it is directed; as I have noted, it commits us to sociality, puts freedom into action, and demands reason and justice. Levinas' account of the saying by means of which the ethical command is issued may leave us with the impression that we might not be able adequately to state what the command 'says', precisely because to do so would be to fix the saying in a said that would inevitably be something different from it. This impression notwithstanding, Levinas does explicitly state what the Other expresses in his command: his "first word", Levinas writes in *Totality and Infinity*, is "you shall not commit murder" (199). In the next section, I will attempt to explain the meaning of this seemingly explicit command in view of the idea that the Other speaks in a mode of immediate sensibility prior to reason and discourse. As I will argue, this expression of resistance to murder should not be understood as a practical rule or prohibition, but rather signifies my obligation to treat the Other as a unique individual and never as a thing or object of consciousness. Then, in the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the notion of freedom that Levinas derives from this

⁵ If it seems paradoxical that the saying of the Other establishes intelligibility and yet is itself already a type of successful communication, for Levinas it would be a greater paradox to suppose that the order of reason could itself be an ultimate ground: how could a common order of intelligibility exist without presupposing an event wherein an individual subjectivity crosses the vast divide between himself and another by first showing or giving himself to another?
account, endeavoring to explain how it is that the command of the other presupposes, challenges, and enables freedom.

4.2.2 Murder and violence

In "Freedom and Command", Levinas states that one way in which the "originality of the encounter with a face, and the structure of command" can be exhibited is by the "opposition" of the face (21). He links this opposition to a prohibition on murder:

The being that expresses itself, that faces me, says no to me by his very expression. This no is not merely formal, but it is not the no of a hostile force of a threat; it is the impossibility of killing him who presents that face; it is the possibility of encountering a being through an interdiction. The face is the fact that a being affects us not in the indicative, but in the imperative, and is thus outside all categories. (21)

Here Levinas refers to the face and its opposition to murder as something that the Other expresses, or manifests in its expression. He does this again in Totality and Infinity, where he refers to this opposition as the "primordial expression" [l'expression originelle] of the face:

This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial expression, is the first word: "you shall not commit murder". (TI 199)

In describing the 'impossibility' of killing this way, Levinas means to emphasize the immediate way in which the prohibition against murder is made manifest. Levinas does not say that the expression of 'do-not-murder' (henceforth DNM) is signified by or derived from the face; if it were, this might suggest that DNM is some ethical rule that exists independently of the face or some practical law that could be the product of or
premise in a chain of reasoning. The "impossibility of murder" does not appear as a first law of practical reason; it is not the first thing said by the Other. Rather, "the infinite resistance to murder in a face is this signification independent of Sinngebung"; it is the saying of the Other, or the intelligible meaning he conveys prior to intentional consciousness and the context of reason and world it establishes ("Freedom and Command" 22). What remains lacking in this account is an explanation of exactly how this opposition affects, or should affect, my choices, decisions, or actions. Nevertheless we can gain some purchase on the meaning of this opposition of the Other by attempting to discover what it is that this opposition opposes. Is it my desire to kill the Other? If so, we are owed some account of why it is plausible to assume every subject who encounters an Other wants to kill that Other. Is the Other's resistance simply an opposition to my freedom as such? If this is so, Levinas needs to explain how I could possibly respond to the demands of the Other without my freedom -- is it not only by willing freely that I am able to take up different attitudes and behave differently towards him (e.g., to wish the Other well, to feed the hungry, to protect the defenseless)?

This initial summary of the prohibition on murder, DNM, might make it seem that the prohibition is a purely metaethical "impossibility" that would in no way constrict my first-order ethical reasoning or actual behavior. Certainly such a view finds support in Levinas' claim in "Freedom and Command" that "the impossibility of killing" is not a "real impossibility" but merely an "intelligible" one; it is also suggested in Totality and Infinity when he again asserts that it is not "real" but rather "purely ethical" ("Freedom and Command" or Totality and Infinity; in doing so, I use his later framework to explicate his earlier discussions of the prohibition on murder.)

6 Note that Levinas himself does not apply the terms saying and said in this way in "Freedom and Command" or Totality and Infinity; in doing so, I use his later framework to explicate his earlier discussions of the prohibition on murder.
and Command" 22, *TI* 199). Clearly we are not dealing here with an ordinary moral law, and any effort to read Levinas as suggesting that DNM is actually a rule meant to prohibit some sort of physical violence towards other persons would be strained. Nevertheless, to suppose that the 'unreality' of DNM means that this command is exclusively metaethical would be to ignore Levinas' claims that it is linked to the order of reasons and justice; more on this in a moment. Instead, it is best to read Levinas' assertion that this command, this impossibility is not "real" as a claim that it is 'pre-real', roughly taking "real" to apply to all those objects that can be objects of intentional apprehension. This reading finds support in Levinas' claim in "Freedom and Command" -- quoted above -- that what distinguishes the "imperative" of the Other from the ordinary "indicative" way in which we encounter beings is that in this "imperative . . . a being affects us . . . outside all categories", i.e., in a mode other than ordinary intentional apprehension (21). This reading is supported also by the larger context of Levinas' comment regarding the unreality of DNM in *Totality and Infinity*:

> If the resistance to murder were not ethical but real, we would have a *perception* of it, with all that reverts to the subjective in perception. We would remain within the idealism of a *consciousness* of struggle, and not in relationship with the Other, a relationship that can turn into struggle, but already overflows the consciousness of struggle. The epiphany of the face is ethical. (199)

In this passage it is clear that "real" does not imply a mode of existence that is more fundamental, objective, or true. To the contrary, while the "real" can be perceived, the limitations imposed by this perception are no advantage since perception grasps the Other as one who is opposed to me -- i.e., as one against whom I "struggle" -- and misses the true relationship with the Other, which "overflows" it. Thus the 'unreality' of DNM is no
evidence that it is insignificant or trivial. A much more interesting and important consideration, however, is the question of whether the fact that DNM is unreal, unperceived, unsaid, and pre-conscious means that it is merely transcendental or that it has only metaethical significance. The short answer to this question is that it does not -- although DNM is itself a metaethical claim. A longer answer, which I will provide in what follows, will require me to explain in greater detail the sort of ethical commitment that DNM intimates, given that DNM is not itself a first-order obligation nor is it the sort of rational first principle from which obligations might be derived.7

Perhaps the best reason why we should resist thinking that there is a divide between what is commanded or prohibited by DNM and all the practical choices and actions that make up an ethical life is that Levinas suggests otherwise by insisting that the pre-intentional manifestation of the face is encountered within and amidst all the worldly things and events that are encountered through intentional consciousness. Over and over, we find this theme in Levinas: the saying of the Other is encountered within a said; the anarchy of the face is an interruption within worldly history; reason and signification are part of the same plant whose roots are the pre-rational meaning expressed by the face. Thus it should come as no surprise when Levinas tells us that the intelligible opposition of the Other, or his resistance to murder, leads "without violence to the order of institutions and coherent discourse" (22). There can be no disagreement that the primordial expression of the Other, which Levinas formulates as DNM, is in some way

7 What follows is, of course, not the most complete answer possible; no doubt many more pages could be written elucidating the precise relationship between the primordial expression of the face and all those rules of ethics that are part-and-parcel of the order of justice -- and one wishes Levinas himself had written them!
the basis for justice and ethics. The difficulty is to understand how DNM leads to an "order of institutions and coherent discourse", and whether it prescribes any particular sort of order.

One way to unpack the relation between DNM and the "order of institutions" is to return to a question raised above -- namely, the question of what the opposition of the other opposes. If we can answer this question, we might hope to understand what sort of 'institution' or ethical rule might be established by that opposition. Levinas' clearest answer to this question is that the expression of the face opposes what he calls "violence". This answer may seem to make sense prima facie, since murder is perhaps a quintessential form of violence. In fact, however, just as Levinas does not use the term "murder" in a "real" sense, neither does he use the term "violence" to refer to some category of harmful and aggressive acts, as one might ordinarily suppose. On the contrary, "violent action" is for Levinas first and foremost action that fails to maintain the proper relationship with what he calls the "individuality" of the thing: violent action "does not touch the individuality of the one who receives the action", it "consists . . . in never approaching [things] in their individuality", and it "denies that being all its individuality" ("Freedom and Command" 18-20). Levinas uses terminology that has physical implications in order to describe violence -- e.g., it is "the direct application of force to a being" -- but this terminology should be read as largely metaphorical since he makes it clear that violence is a certain attitude towards beings (Ibid. 20). To be "violent"

8 Note that Levinas does also sometimes refer to the face as "violent" because of the way in which its radical alterity interrupts self-satisfied intentional consciousness. See for example OB 43, where Levinas claims that saying is imposed with a "good violence". Clearly, this sense of violence is not the same as the one under consideration here.
is, writes Levinas, to fail to approach the Other by seeing him as a face; instead, one sees him as a challenge to one's own freedom and projects:

In other words, what characterizes violent action, what characterizes tyranny, is that one does not face what the action is being applied to. To put it more precisely: it is that one does not see the face in the other, one sees the other freedom as a force, savage; one identifies the absolute character of the other with his force. (Ibid. 19)

To act violently is to encounter, if you will, the Levinasian face and treat it as the Sartrean Look. When Levinas says that violent action does not approach another person in his individuality, he means that this approach does not appreciate the radically unique mode in which the Other presents himself.

Alternately, to commit violence is to fail to distinguish between the way that faces and things show themselves, and accordingly to treat a face as though it were a thing. "Action on things", according to Levinas, is "work"; this relation with a being submits that being to "general laws" in order to obtain control over it (Ibid. 18-19). This is why, as Levinas asserts in Totality and Infinity, "Violence can only aim at a face" (225). To treat an object as an object is appropriate, but to treat a face as an object is violence.

Levinas also uses the terms "labor" to indicate action carried out on things and "war" to describe the situation in which the approach of labor is taken to "a free being" ("Freedom and Command" 19). Contrasting labor with war, he writes,

War surely does not differ from labor solely by virtue of the greater complexity of forces that have to be overcome, or by virtue of the unforeseeable character of those forces and of their composition; it differs also by a new attitude on the part of the agent with regard to his adversary. Is not the adversary himself recognized to be a freedom? But this freedom is an animal freedom, wild, faceless. It is not given to me in its face, which is a total resistance without being a force (Ibid.)
Thus in "war" my encounter with the Other is governed by my focus on his freedom, which appears as a "wild, faceless" threat. In this state of violence I am not capable of appreciating the Other's freedom as a feature that enables me to enter into common action with him or to appreciate the way in which my own freedom might depend on his. It is against this violence that the opposition of the Other expressed as DNM is directed.

Against this approach, the "pacific opposition" of the Other "arrests and paralyzes my violence by his call, which does not do violence, and comes from on high" ("Freedom and Command" 19, TI 291).⁹

To say that the opposition of the face is an opposition to violence, in this sense, provides a new way of understanding the DNM rule. Since to do violence is to treat the Other as an object, to resist or prohibit violence is to resist or prohibit this sort of approach to the Other. Thus, when the Other expresses the ethical saying "do not murder", we can fairly interpret this as a prohibition on treating the Other as an object. This sort of a prohibition, to be sure, is not the sort of ethical rule that tells us precisely what to do in particular circumstances. Nevertheless it guides our practical reasoning by constraining the way we consider the Other and his freedom, which will affect the ends that we set for ourselves and the means that we take to reach those ends. Here, however, we will have to resist the temptation to consider any generalized or abstract example, since Levinas' text does not permit us to read DNM as a universal rule or as one that applies to all persons generally or reciprocally; to the contrary, this expression comes from the radically individual face and is directed only at me. Hence we cannot suppose

⁹ Levinas is inconsistent on whether or not the face itself does violence. See previous footnote.
that DNM guides our practical reasoning in such a way as to yield concrete ethical laws stating that it is always right or wrong to do "x" to persons in general or certain classes of persons, where "x" would be some particular action or attitude (e.g., "It is always wrong to lie to persons" or "It is always right to visit the sick"). If DNM prohibits violence in and only in a unique encounter between me and an Other, then the responsibility I acquire through this prohibition remains unable to be generalized and is inaccessible to other Others.

Notwithstanding this point, it is plausible to presume that each human Other\textsuperscript{10} does manifest himself by means of the face, in which case it is also possible to assume that each person "says" the DNM rule to each other. Although Levinas throughout his oeuvre seems to focus on one particular encounter between a self and an Other in order to stress the absolutely individual way in which a face manifests itself, the very fact that the Other is conceptually indeterminate means that the experience of "the Other" is presupposed not by any particular experience of another person but rather by all such experiences. There are also rare instances in which Levinas suggests that the radical Other can pick out a plural subject; see, for example, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity", where he suggests that "men [sic] . . . put into question my freedom" (50).\textsuperscript{11} Thus it is fair to say, generally, that to encounter persons as such presupposes the encounter with the face; this is true even though we only encounter 'persons as such' by

\textsuperscript{10} At least each human other. There is considerable debate nowadays about whether animals might also have a "face" in Levinas' sense. (Cf., e.g., Perpich 2008 Chapter 5.)

\textsuperscript{11} The original passage is phrased as a series of rhetorical questions: "But if things do not resist the ruses of thought, and confirm the philosophy of the same, without ever putting into question the freedom of the I, is this also true of men? Are they given to me as the things are? Do they not put into question my freedom?"
failing to encounter them as persons, and encounter a person (i.e., encounter him as an Other) only by receiving the face he manifests. This suggests in turn that DNM applies to me in each and every encounter with another person even if I cannot conclude that it is a universal ethical principle.\footnote{Does DNM apply to others in their actions towards me? That is, do I also resist violence by saying DNM to them? If so, Levinas does not discuss it. Cf. Bernasconi 1999 for a reading of Levinas that nevertheless stresses signs of reciprocity in his thought.}

Leaving aside this question of whether DNM is a universal principle, I must return to the claim that this prohibition on murder -- now interpreted as the directive not to treat the Other as an object -- can in general guide our practical reasoning, or our deliberations about just courses of action. This claim needs to be explained, both because this is not how Levinas explicitly describes this primordial expression of the Other, and, more importantly, because this interpretation may seem to make an unjustified slide from the order of the saying to the order of the said. "Do not murder", as Levinas explains, does not belong to the order of the said, and the "violence" that this expression opposes is an attitude directed at the pre-ontological face. War and its opposition seem thus to operate exclusively on the pre-rational plane of the saying. How is it, then, that this opposition makes the jump to praxis?

On this point Levinas' texts are woefully lacking in concrete examples. Levinas' well-known mention of "the simple 'After you, sir'" as an example of the solidarity enabled by the relation with the Other is perhaps the only concrete example of ethical behavior he provides (\textit{OB} 117). Nevertheless if the link between the expression of the Other and the concrete comportment it inspires is not frequently exemplified, it is a constant theme. As I have already showed, Levinas explicitly defends the claim that
saying does lead to the order of reasons, institutions, and ethics. Furthermore, a more careful look at Levinas' account of violence and war will reveal that these approaches do not take place exclusively on the pre-rational plane of the saying but are rather conscious approaches to the Other that affect my an-archic relation to him. Violence, as Levinas puts it, is an "attitude" with regard to the Other; it is a way of regarding him by refusing to acknowledge the individuality of the face and as such it presupposes intentional consciousness since it consists in mis-applying the intentional approach to being. Thus to do violence is to insist on my own conscious grasp of the Other over and above his own self-manifestation, while to accept the expression of the Other is to sacrifice that grasp and agree to re-create my consciousness anew (Cf. "Freedom and Command" 22).

Levinas indicates that this sacrifice involves challenges to my consciousness that are, eo ipso, events that must take place on the historical, rational plane of the said. If it is true that DNM "paralyses power by its infinite resistance", this does not mean that it destroys intentional consciousness altogether but rather that it calls consciousness to reconstruct itself as a relation to the Other (TI 199).

Perhaps the best evidence that the opposition of the face is meant to affect the practical, rational plane of concrete ethics, however, is found in Levinas' description of freedom. In "Freedom and Command", Levinas claims that the opposition to violence expressed by DNM "puts my freedom into action" ("Freedom and Command" 19). As he puts it in Totality and Infinity, the expression of the Other "promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness"; he also says that the responsibility to which the Other calls me "gives rise to my freedom" (200). In the next section, I will explain how it is that freedom is both grounded in the expression of the Other and yet precedes the encounter with the
Other in such a way that I can freely choose to meet and acknowledge that expression. Here I will argue that true freedom is a power to act in ways that are more or less just and that the encounter with the Other reveals a normativity that is present within freedom itself. Insofar as it promotes freedom, the face also invests it with responsibility, says DNM, calls it to renounce violence, and therefore recreates purely egoistic freedom as "freedom in heteronomy", or freedom that puts itself into question by placing itself permanently in relation to, or in dialogue with, the Other.

4.3 Freedom

In the essay "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" and in Totality and Infinity, Levinas criticizes freedom as a type of egoism, associating it with enjoyment, possession, and intentional consciousness. Using Kantian language, Levinas writes that freedom has a "naive and self-sure spontaneity" insofar as it presumes that its own thematization will adequately capture everything it encounters. Using Sartrean language, he associates the "imperialism of the same" that "is the whole essence of freedom" with "[t]he 'for itself' as a mode of existence" that "designates an attachment to oneself" (TI 86-87). What Levinas has in mind here is what he also calls the "freedom of representation", which I discussed in Chapter 1 (Cf. Chapter 1 §2.2). Less a freedom to act in particular ways than to approach beings in the mode of objectifying intentionality, this freedom is the ontological situation of an ego, or representational consciousness. When this ego encounters objects in the world that challenge it, it overcomes them by engaging in what Levinas calls "philosophy", or the search for truth wherein "the other's alterity" is "dissolved" by the application of "abstract essence[s]" ("Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" 49-50).
Clearly, doing "philosophy" in this sense does not represent the total victory of freedom over what challenges it. The "forces of nature that aid us and kill us, things that encumber us or serve us, men who love us and enslave us", which Levinas lists as "foreign" terms that threaten to compromise freedom, must remain limitations on my activity; they are, as Sartre might have it, inescapable elements of my situation. In understanding these forces, however -- i.e., in comprehending them intentionally, subordinating them to categories, or otherwise representing them to myself -- I transform them into the sort of thing that I can manage, restrain, predict, and, in short, control.

This approach, however, fails to work when it comes to the face that another person manifests to me. In "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" Levinas expresses this with a series of rhetorical questions:

But if things do not resist the ruses of thought, and confirm the philosophy of the same without putting into question the freedom of the I, is this also true of men? Are they given to me as the things are? Do they not put into question my freedom? (50)

As Levinas explains, this 'putting into question' of my freedom "is not something added on to spontaneous and free consciousness" but is rather a "new situation" wherein freedom is "guilty", or "knows itself to be unjust" (Ibid. 50-51). In Totality and Infinity Levinas talks about the "shame that freedom feels for itself" before the Other (86). The guilt or shame of freedom comes about because, insofar as he is in relation to the Other, the free being experiences his own limits. This is true both because the Other is a condition of reason as such and because his face challenges my attempt to comprehend it. In both of these ways the Other "imposes himself as an exigency that dominates this freedom, and hence as more primordial than everything that takes place in me" -- i.e., as
more primordial than the naive freedom that marks the ontological situation of enjoyment and possession (*Ibid.* 87). This freedom that feels ashamed before the Other is an egoistical freedom, a "freedom without responsibility, a freedom of play" (*OB* 116).

According to Levinas, for many philosophers the 'freedom of play' without responsibility, which cannot help but be ashamed before the Other, just is what freedom is (*Ibid.*). If this were so, then the challenge to my freedom presented by an intersubjective encounter would result in a conflict, as in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Against this account, Levinas proposes that the encounter both puts my freedom "in question" and "invests" me with freedom in another sense; it challenges the naive spontaneity that does violence to the Other precisely by revealing the true ground of freedom (*TI* 85). Levinas' key philosophical target here is the idea that we are first or essentially free beings and are secondarily limited by certain responsibilities that we incur when we encounter other free individuals. He takes this account of rights and responsibilities to be the standard account of freedom in Western philosophy and assimilates it to various other philosophical theses: that freedom is "founded only on itself", that freedom is "primary" or prior to responsibility, and -- à la Sartre -- that human existence is "condemned to freedom" (*TI* 84-5, *OB* 121-2). Against these, he argues,

Existence is not in reality condemned to freedom, but is *invested* as freedom. Freedom is not bare. To philosophize is to trace freedom back to what lies before it, to disclose the investiture that liberates freedom from the arbitrary. Knowledge as a critique, as a tracing back to what precedes freedom, can arise only in a being that has an origin prior to its origin -- that is created. (*TI* 84-5)  

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13 Note, however, that Leinvas also positively appropriates and modifies Sartre's idea that we are "condemned" to freedom in a different essay, "Humanism and An-archy". I will discuss this briefly in Chapter 5, §3.
Thus freedom, for Levinas, is not its own foundation but rather is founded on something else -- my responsibility for the Other. As Stéphane Habib puts it, Levinas proposes a "responsibility-freedom [responsabilité-liberté]", or a freedom that justified by and dependent on my responsibility for an Other. Habib contrasts this to the "freedom-responsibility [liberté-responsabilité]" that Sartre presents in Being and Nothingness, wherein my responsibility would be always dependent on my all-powerful freedom (Habib 153-4).

Note that in the passage quoted above Levinas uses the idea of 'creation' very differently from how Sartre uses it in the Notebooks. While creation for Sartre refers to the activity of the for-itself, a shaping of the world that it turns out must occur in relation to other persons, for Levinas it refers to the pre-ontological 'activity' of the Other who shapes my own being as a free self capable of rational action in a world. Thus the key difference is that Levinas refuses to allow that I participate in creation, stressing as always the radical alterity of the Other who he claims is the source of freedom. The religious tinge to the term 'creation' is, in Levinas, implicitly appropriated and put to new use in order to emphasize the fact that the Other who 'creates' is the ultimate ground of my being and freedom -- this is "a creation ex nihilo". The religious overtones of 'creation' also help emphasize that my capacity to do good, or my capacity to be moral, comes from beyond me:

The marvel of creation does not only consist in being a creation ex nihilo, but in that it results in a being capable of receiving a revelation, learning that it is created, and putting itself in question. The miracle of creation lies in creating a moral being. (TI 89)
The investiture of freedom, the creation of a moral being: these are the ways in which Levinas positively characterizes the result of my encounter with the Other who challenges my naive spontaneity and breaks up the self-satisfied ego.

Levinas gives no arguments that ethical freedom is grounded on responsibility for an Other over and above his explanation of the fact that the Other grounds intentional life in general, as I discussed in Chapter 2. The presumption here seems to be that freedom, a capacity to act in certain ways, rests on the rational capacity to set ends and decide on means to pursue them, but this capacity in turn belongs to an ego or "I" whose being is to be a hostage to the Other. Hence freedom depends on responsibility to the Other because that responsibility, the full manifestation of the Other's speech, is what institutes a rational ego in general. Note that Levinas' thesis here -- that freedom depends on responsibility -- is both epistemological and ethical in the traditional sense of those terms. That is, he eagerly conflates the freedom of consciousness that subordinates objects to categories and the freedom of will through which we act, and claims that both of these are dependent on my responsibility for the Other. Levinas' account of freedom would not be so very new if he simply claimed that these two freedoms -- the 'naive spontaneity' of consciousness and free will -- depended on intersubjective experience in general. In that case he would simply hold the controversial but nevertheless widespread position that rational thought and action are made possible only in a community of two or more since it is such a community that grounds normativity in general by making it possible to justify oneself, or give reasons for one's beliefs or actions. Of course, Levinas does hold this position -- viz., that the encounter with an Other is at the root of normativity in

213
general\textsuperscript{14} -- but what is unique to his account is that the encounter with an Other is \textit{primordially ethical} even before it grounds ethical normativity (i.e., justice), such that the true and the ethical do not just depend on an encounter with an Other who is merely other but rather on an encounter with an Other who Levinas calls the Good. Responsibilities do not arise in a relationship with another person; rather the radical alterity of Levinas' Other signifies his \textit{goodness}, such that the encounter with that Other brings me into contact not merely with an intersubjective space of reasons but with goodness and responsibility themselves.\textsuperscript{15} These, in turn, constitute me as a free, conscious and rational being.\textsuperscript{16}

Hence, as the motto goes, ethics is first philosophy.

One way to explain what Levinas means when he says that my freedom is grounded in responsibility for the Other is to say that freedom is constituted with normativity 'within' it.\textsuperscript{17} This way of putting it nicely contrasts the account with Sartre's position in \textit{Being and Nothingness} that freedom is the source of normativity. It also explains why Levinas calls the freedom with which the Other invests me "finite freedom". Freedom is finite because it bears within it a normativity that is the responsibility for an Other; it "is not simply an infinite freedom operating in a limited field" but rather a capacity essentially limited since true freedom just is the capacity to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Thanks to Gary Gutting for pointing out to me that for Levinas \textit{all} normativity, not just ethical normativity, depends on the Other, and for suggesting that this is not a unique philosophical position.
\item \textsuperscript{15} It is, after all, goodness that is "other than being", a position that Levinas attributes to Plato (\textit{OB} 18-19, cf. 52, 118).
\item \textsuperscript{16} Cf., e.g., \textit{Otherwise than Being} 56-57: "The passivity of the one, its responsibility or its pain, do not begin in consciousness -- that is, do not begin. On the hither side of consciousness, they consist in this pre-original hold of the Good over it, always older than any present, any beginning."
\item \textsuperscript{17} Again, thanks to Gary Gutting for suggesting that freedom for Levinas finds itself with a normativity within it.
\end{itemize}
respond the Other, not a capacity to pursue any end we choose (OB 124). Levinas points to the pre-ontological source of finite freedom when he calls it a "mode of freedom, ontologically impossible" (Ibid.). Freedom that would make sense "ontologically" would be infinite, unlimited freedom; freedom to do otherwise; freedom prior to responsibility; or, to use Levinas' words, "freedom of play". Nevertheless, finite freedom is the only sort of freedom that is ethically possible, or rather the only sort of freedom relevant to ethical behavior, since it is through this freedom that justice becomes possible: "It is this way of welcoming an absolute existent that we discover in justice and injustice, and that discourse, essentially teaching, effectuates" (TI 89).

There is a way of putting this point that reveals its similarity to virtue ethics: for Levinas, free beings, qua free, have a telos or end that determines what counts as 'proper functioning' for them. As in Aristotle, where man's telos is a certain type of activity, so too for Levinas the end of a free being is not a static state but rather a type of life. Of course, Levinas neglects to give his account of man's telos the specific sort of content Aristotle does; there is no list of virtues in Totality and Infinity, no account of the mean in Otherwise than Being. What Levinas does do, however, is suggest that what man ought to be is the fullest realization of what he truly is; hence his telos, if you will, is a life directed towards being a hostage of the Other, a life of self-sacrifice and self-questioning in pursuit of justice that would be based on our openness to the alterity of the Other. That the good for man is his state of being a hostage is made clear in Otherwise than Being, where Levinas claims that the "original goodness" of man stems from the fact that the self is "accused beyond his fault before freedom, and thus in an unavowable innocence" (121). It is in the relation with the Other that one becomes free, or capable of good,
whereas evil would be a rejection of this self-creating relation. Levinas gives further insight into the general sort of activity that characterizes life as a hostage in "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity", where he describes this life as "the life of freedom in heteronomy", which "consists in an infinite movement of freedom putting itself into question" (58). This movement of putting egotistical freedom into question is, as we have seen, the same movement that creates true freedom and the moral self. Thus this infinite 'movement' of freedom is the lived creation of "moral consciousness", which remains "essentially unsatisfied" since I can never fully discharge my obligations to the Other (Ibid.). In "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity", Levinas also refers to the face to face as the "situation" in which freedom is put into question and "in which it finds it has a master and a judge" (59). Levinas' "situation" is unlike Sartre's in that it is not made up of facts about the world that set limits on the exercise of freedom. Nevertheless Levinas' pre-ontological "situation" does set limits on what freedom is, since it creates that freedom. This is why Levinas claims that the face to face situation "liberates freedom from the arbitrary": my situation in relation to an Other makes it possible for me to act for me to act for a reason, or to pursue ends that help me ultimately to achieve my highest good, or telos (TI 84-5).

To read Levinas as proposing that man has a telos hidden within his freedom is, admittedly, an imaginative reconstruction, and one that threatens inappropriately to minimize Levinas' refusal to subordinate intersubjective experience and human individuals to any general conceptual scheme. The advantage of this reconstruction, however, is that it brings to the fore Levinas' suggestion that freedom has a normative structure embedded within it. True freedom is not 'arbitrary'; it is a summons to act in
consideration of my responsibility for the Other. Again, the normativity of freedom is indicated by the fact that on Levinas' account violence is the "contrary of freedom", not just the contrary of peace or goodness (OB 138). The one who does violence -- i.e., who treats the Other as an object rather than a unique face -- fails to be a genuinely free being; this self fails to be what it supposed to be, or what it is created as in the encounter with the Other.

Moreover, we are now in a position to see that this normativity within freedom is meant to function regulatively, or as a basis for practical ethical laws. As Levinas tells it, I am not restricted by the primordial expression "do not murder" but rather called forth as a free being, called into question, commanded to be open to the needs of others. Freedom is an ontological reality, a result of the encounter with the Other; freedom is a lived said that reveals the commanding saying of the Other, which serves as the ur-criterion of what is just and unjust and constitutes freedom as a capacity for good. This intrinsic normativity of freedom, a result of the face-to-face encounter, is the link between Levinas' ur-ethics and the order of justice that is supposed to flow from it. If any part of Levinas' philosophy can substantiate his remark to Philippe Nemo -- "One can without doubt construct an ethics in function of what I have just said but this is not my own theme" -- it is this account of the normativity that the free, rational self irrevocably bears in virtue of its transcendent origin. Since, however, this normative structure seems to consist of just one, rather formal practical principle -- avoid doing "violence" -- no reader can help but wish that Levinas had on occasion made "ethics" his theme. Nevertheless Levinas' phenomenological ethics, which legitimately enables us to consider what does not 'appear' in the ordinary exercise of the will, reveals that freedom just is the capacity to
pursue justice and that the good life for man is a life of perpetually putting the apparent primacy of his freedom into question. In the final chapter of this work, I will bring these insights of Levinas into dialogue with those of Sartre in order to draw some conclusions about the worth and limitations of phenomenological ethics.
CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSION: PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAETHICS AS
A HUMANISM OF THE OTHER

In the preceding chapters, I have endeavored to describe both the ethics that Sartre and Levinas propose and the foundational phenomenological and ontological assumptions about the self and others upon which their ethics rely. In this final chapter, I would like to draw some conclusions, based on these two case studies, regarding the contribution to ethics that seems to be available from phenomenology. As a first step, I would like to address the apparent absence in their ethics of both concrete ethical rules (e.g., "don't lie") and procedural rules (e.g., Kant's categorical imperative) for determining such norms. If these are absent in Sartre and Levinas, is this fact accidental or intrinsic to their ethics? Here I will argue that Sartre's and Levinas' refusal to list or determine particular moral laws is in fact essential to the type of account that each gives.

This, however, is no more problematic for their ethics than it is for any metaethical account that focuses on the structure and origin of ethics and which makes claims about the level of first-order obligation only to the extent that the general structure of ethics determines it. Hence, I will argue, Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenological ethics do have a distinctive metaethical contribution to offer. This contribution, which I will develop in the second section of this chapter, is a defense of what I will call the sociality of ethical freedom, or the claim that in exercising my freedom ethically my choices are...
determined by the demands and perspective of other persons. Finally, in the third section I will offer some comments on how this claim is linked to Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenological approach as well as to the idea that ethics is a matter of self-construction.

5.1 Phenomenological ethics as phenomenological metaethics

Before I argue that Sartre's and Levinas' ethics have something special to offer, I will need to make some remarks regarding what might be regarded as a failing of their ethical theory. This possible failing is the lack of a "first-order" normative ethics. As should be clear from my discussion of Sartre's and Levinas' ethics in chapters 3 and 4, I take it that the ethical theory offered by these phenomenologists amounts to an account of the ground or source of freedom and a description of the way in which becoming ethical marks a change in the self and a corresponding change in or realization of one's relations with others. I take it that these considerations are, for the most part, what most philosophers would think of as metaethical considerations, in contrast to both normative theory, which would describe a set of rules or a procedure for right practical reasoning, and applied ethics, wherein particular ethical quandaries or sorts of these are considered. More broadly, we might say that Sartre and Levinas are predominantly interested in describing what ethics is, and this is a metaethical topic. This tendency towards metaethics results from the phenomenological approaches taken by Sartre and Levinas; because they take this approach, ethics becomes, for them, a philosophical investigation into how experience of a particular sort constitutes the self and into the links between human action, conscious intentions, and the good. Again, this approach leads them to
focus on topics that are distinctly metaethical: for example, they examine how it is that an individual becomes ethical, particularly with an eye towards alterations in the self that are brought about by or through an encounter with an other, and they take pains to analyze what freedom is. In this section I will defend the claim that Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenological ethics, as I have described these in the previous two chapters, are predominantly metaethical and begin to explain the value of this approach.

5.1.1 Sartre

In describing Sartre's ethics, I focused on his notion of a conversion brought about through an appropriate type of reflection, by means of which an individual can understand and modify his fundamental life project, or the goal at which his actions aim. I discussed Sartre's explanation of the fact that freedom, which he sometimes seems to suggest is absolutely undetermined, is actually conditioned by its situation. We saw that while Sartre holds that a priori, abstract ethics is an illusion, he thinks that a concrete ethics is to be derived from the historical situation within which each individual is forced to exercise his freedom, including the other persons who are a part of that situation. Looking back at each of these discussions, it is not difficult to see that Sartre is clearly interested in primarily metaethical topics. He wants to describe the conditions of ethics -- the rejection of bad faith and the project of becoming an ens causa sui, conversion, authentic freedom, an appropriate relation with others, etc. -- as well as what we might call the "essence" of ethics, which he suggests just is to accept, choose, and act in accord with one's absolute freedom.
The impression that Sartre's phenomenological ontology yields metaethical rather than normative ethical conclusions is, perhaps, the motivation for one of the most common early criticisms of *Being and Nothingness* -- namely, that the ontology and account of values found in that work do not allow Sartre to recommend or condemn any particular action. This is, perhaps, not such a terrible lacuna in itself, since by his own admission Sartre does not provide an ethics in *Being and Nothingness*. However, since Sartre does seem to condemn bad faith and also to hold that men are fully free to create whatever values they like, critics rightly saw that the inattention to normative theory created a tension in the work: from what standpoint can bad faith be condemned, if there is no objective good, no norm for exercising radical freedom? In response to this sort of challenge, Sartre sought to clarify the relation between his ontology and the possibility of normative ethical claims. The account of "concrete ethics" found in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* certainly represents one of Sartre's answers to this sort of objection. By explaining his claim that we are condemned to freedom in light of the relation between human-created values and the historical situation of freedom, Sartre clearly endeavors to explain how his account of human existence is related to questions about particular values, choices, and ethical quandaries. Values, he insists, are formed in and by the choice of actions, so they are not *a priori* norms or reasons for acting; nevertheless, values implicit in one's choice of a fundamental project take on a normative role, as does the value ascribed to freedom itself in pure reflection. Meanwhile, the question of particular ethical quandaries seems to inspire Sartre's growing interest in a theory of history: since there is no *a priori* source of ethical normativity and values are revealed in human action, then history as the story of human action becomes the context within which practical
reasoning, ethical and otherwise, becomes intelligible. All of this, to be sure, is part of Sartre's gesturing towards a more adequate account of the ethical normativity that could be derived from the phenomenological ontology, and in particular the account of being-for-itself, that is found in *Being and Nothingness*. The *Notebooks*, however, remain an unfinished project, and to the extent that they address the question of particular normative judgments they do so by describing the structure of ethics -- i.e., they do so on the metaethical level. Does Sartre anywhere attempt to address in first-order terms the question of how we make normative judgments without objective values?

Indeed he does -- or at least he seems to -- in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, where he directly addresses the challenge that he cannot consistently condemn bad faith. His response is twofold: first, he defends his ability to pass judgment against bad faith on the basis of the account of human existence in *Being and Nothingness* and, secondly, he acknowledges that his account does not allow one to pass judgment in general against many sorts of action.

Sartre begins his defense of his judgment against bad faith by claiming, "we can pass judgment, for as I said, we choose in the presence of others, and we choose ourselves in the presence of others" (47). Here Sartre is alluding to a discussion earlier in the essay in which he defended the idea that there is a "human universality" just in the sense that each individual's choice of himself is at the same time the choice of a certain model of the human that is implicitly chosen for all (43). Sartre then goes on to explain that two different sorts of judgment against bad faith are possible. In the first, "I do not pass moral judgment" but rather label bad faith an "error" insofar as "it is a dissimulation of man's full freedom of commitment" (47-48). In claiming that this first judgment is not
a moral judgment, Sartre seems to have in mind the idea that bad faith is simply inconsistent with the human situation; it fails to accord with the facts about human freedom. He does not mean to suggest that bad faith is itself not a moral problem, because in his second judgment against bad faith he asserts that it is. This second judgment, which Sartre explicitly calls a moral judgment, is based on the fact that freedom, under any concrete circumstance, can have no other aim than itself, and once a man realizes, in his state of abandonment, that it is he who imposes values, he can will but one thing: freedom as the foundation of all values (48).

Since bad faith is an effort to avoid one's own freedom, it is obviously at odds with the requirement that man will his own freedom.

The precise sense in which this moral judgment against bad faith is different from the preceding claim that bad faith is an "error" is not quite clear; indeed, Sartre seems in his second judgment to be arguing that because bad faith is an error, a denial of the human condition, it is also a moral failing. The judgment here rests on Sartre's claim that man must will his own freedom. While Sartre's defense of this claim and its success is a hotly contested issue,¹ his basic position is that whenever I will anything, I will it as a

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¹ Jonathan Webber takes it that Sartre fails to support properly the idea that "it is inconsistent to value anything while denying freedom" and that he fails more generally to give us any reason for preferring authenticity to bad faith (134-135). Webber criticizes Sartre for presuming that we value truth and/or logical consistency, claiming that he is not in a position to presume this since freedom is the only source of values. Similar worries can be found in Thomas Anderson's Sartre's Two Ethics, 62, and Thomas Flynn's Sartre and Marxist Existentialism, 37ff; see Linsenbard 2000, 138-140 for a nice analysis of this material. My own sympathies are with Linda Bell, who defends Sartre's assumption that logical consistency remains a universal value even on the existentialist account: "Those who affirm self-contradictions remove themselves from the framework of human communication. It is difficult to see why it is incumbent on Sartre or any ethicist to produce reasons and arguments to convince those who have thus removed themselves from logic and therefore from discourse" (Bell 1989, 57). As Bell describes it, Sartre's claim that "to value anything whatsoever is to value freedom" is based on the notion that "one who wills the end wills the means" -- i.e., "[s]to choose one's own values", as the authentic individual does, "is to will the means -- freedom" (55).
good; further, the authentic individual admits that through his actions he creates the value of the "good", through an exercise of sheer freedom; consequently, as soon as the authentic individual wills or values anything at all through his activity, consistency commits him to valuing his own freedom. Valuing one's own freedom is therefore required for any consistent exercise of freedom, and "a strictly consistent attitude alone demonstrates good faith" (48). It is not clear whether the consistency at issue is that of means and ends -- I must will my freedom because it is the means to the creation of any other value -- or consistency in the sense of honesty -- in order to live in accord with the facts of the human situation, I must acknowledge that freedom is the source of all values and this fact would cause me to choose freedom as my ultimate value.²

Later in this chapter, I will contrast this argument of Sartre's with his arguments for the claim that I must also will the freedom of others. For my purposes here, however, what is most important is that nothing in this argument or in Sartre's reasoning thus far

² On this point Simone de Beauvoir, who also holds that an individual must choose his own freedom as a primary value, seems to favor of the idea that doing so is necessary as the means to choosing any other value as an end. Hence she asserts in The Ethics of Ambiguity that freedom is the source of all values and the condition of justification: "Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence. The man who seeks to justify his life must want freedom itself absolutely and above everything else" (24). On this point see also Anderson 1976, 62-65.

In her earlier Pyrrhus and Cineas, Beauvoir argues that to be a human subject just is to be free, in the sense of being engaged in free activity; she even seems to suggest that to take freedom as one's primary value -- at least in a practical sense -- seems to be a condition of simply being human. Here, e.g., she describes the difference between the way in which we grasp ourselves and the way we grasp others: "Other men exist only as objects; we alone grasp ourselves in our intimacy and our freedom as subject". Ethics, she continues, must take this fact as a starting point and cannot demand of us that we adopt a "foreign point of view" according to which we are objects, because "That would be to cease being me; it would be to cease being" (128 italics added). The claim that to be human is to grasp oneself as a free subject almost seems to suggest that to be in bad faith is to be less than human. In her essay, however, Beauvoir's main concern is to argue that man's way of being -- i.e., being free -- means he must seek meaning only in the perpetual pursuit of freely chosen goals. (She is also concerned to explain the implications of this fact for my relations with others, and to argue that I must respect their freedom in order to realize mine -- cf. footnote 7, this chapter.)
has provided us with more than metaethical insight into the way in which ethical normativity stems from existentialist premises. First, Sartre links the possibility of ethical judgment to the intersubjective situation of freely chosen values; then, he argues that bad faith, generally speaking, fails to acknowledge the truth about man's freedom and that this is an inconsistent position. The account here concerns the foundation or ground of ethics -- the meaning of freedom, values, and the situation, etc.

Sartre does make particular normative judgments when he applies his discussion of bad faith to two fictional examples, Maggie Tulliver of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and La Sanseverina of Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma*. As Sartre presents them, both of these women are moral exemplars despite the fact that they choose quite differently. Maggie, in love with a man who is already engaged to another woman, chooses "in the name of human solidarity, self-sacrifice [to give] up the man she loves"; La Sanseverina, by contrast, holds that "a great love justifies any sacrifice" and therefore "prefers to overlook the previous engagement of the man she loves" (50). Sartre approves the choices of both of these women, making first-order ethical judgments in their favor, precisely because "the ultimate aim in both cases is freedom" (*Ibid.*). In fact, claims Sartre, the women's "two diametrically opposed moralities . . . are equivalent" because both moralities recommend that the woman in question act in accord with the values she freely chooses. Thus Sartre ends his defense of his condemnation of bad faith by admitting that, from the starting point of his phenomenological ontology, he can't condemn much of anything else: the criticism according to which his existentialism does not allow him to make any ethical judgments, he concludes, "is both true and false. One can choose anything, so long as it involves free commitment" (51).
It is clear, then, that in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* Sartre reneges on any apparent promise to construct a determinate system of moral maxims that one might have hoped to find in his announcement of plans to write an ethics at the end of *Being and Nothingness*. As in the *Notebooks*, he positions himself and his ethics squarely within metaethics, and compares and contrasts his account with Kant's along these lines:

Thus, although the content of morality may vary, a certain form of that morality is universal. Kant states that freedom wills itself and the freedom of others. Agreed. But he believes that the formal and the universal are adequate to constitute a morality. We, to the contrary, believe that principles that are too abstract fail to define action. (49)

It is not merely Kant's formalism but also his own that Sartre regards as too abstract to rule out any action so long as it "involves free commitment". Thus while Sartre insists that a moral judgment against bad faith is possible, he suggests that the principles of this judgment -- his account of authenticity and the necessity that man value his own freedom -- are "too abstract . . . to define action."

One reason why it seems strange to claim that Sartre's ethics are in fact a metaethics, or that Sartre fails to give us a first-order ethics is that Sartre, unlike Levinas, does give us concrete examples of "good" and "bad" individuals both in his properly philosophical works and in his literary works. That is, he makes ostensibly moral judgments or portrays in a negative light those who fail to reflectively grasp and value their freedom above all, while making moral exemplars of those who do. In *Being and Nothingness* we famously meet, for example, the homosexual and his friend, both in bad faith: the former refuses to be identified by his sexuality while his friend insists that he ought to make a "sincere" admission that he is a homosexual, and both remain in bad
faith insofar as they fail to admit that the homosexual is a free for-itself (BN 107-108). Another example: in *Notebooks for an Ethics* Sartre discusses violence at length and claims that rape "allows one to obtain the body of a woman once, but if I want to be the real possessor of this body for life or a long relationship, it ruins this possibility" (NE 180). Curiously, Sartre does not condemn the rapist because he harms the woman or violates her freedom -- or, at least, these are not reasons he offers in this passage. Rather, because in preferring to define himself and his relation to the woman by means of one violent event, "the violent man prefers being to doing"; that is, "For the progressive construction of a lifelong liaison, [he] substitute[s] the ontological irreducibility of a fact that nothing can change" (NE 182). Sartre's moral condemnation is thus once again rooted in the moral culpability of the attempt to escape freedom, which in violence occurs when the violent man attempts to define himself according to an "irretrievable past" (*Ibid.*).

In these cases, ethical judgments of sorts are brought against the individual in question, but the judgments stem from Sartre's metaethical account of authentic human living rather than any first-order account of concrete obligations, rights, or laws. The homosexual and rapist are not immoral because they violate moral norms but rather because their actions fail to accord with the truths of human existence: freedom and the imperative to value freedom, to create oneself through the pursuit of a freely chosen fundamental project. One gets the eerie sense that if a rapist simply embraced his violence as a creative act and continually pursued violence as the expression of freedom, rather than for the sake of asserting his power by establishing himself in "an irretrievable past", his activity would be OK. A Sartrean who wished to resist the suggestion that
violence could accord with Sartre's account might insist that, as a matter of fact, violence always indicates that one has either identified freedom with force or denied freedom altogether, and hence is always to be condemned (Cf. NE 182). This response amounts to the claim that acts of violence in general, or sexual violence more particularly, necessarily entail some sort of bad faith -- a position that Sartre himself did not defend. Even if such a position is available to the Sartrean, however, what I would like to stress is that the moral judgment that results -- i.e., the condemnation of rape -- rests on the metaethical consideration of whether rape as such can be done authentically, in Sartre's particular sense of that term, and not on any claims about first-order moral prohibitions.

Another instance of a seemingly concrete moral example can be found in *Saint Genet*, a work that some have taken to be Sartre's promised work on ethics. In this book we meet an ethical hero who in Sartre's eyes admits his bad faith, confronts the impossibility of doing objective good or evil, and modifies his own fundamental projects in order to reclaim creatively his own identity. Once more, however, Sartre's praise for Genet's moral progress is not praise for a particular sort of action but rather for Genet's attitude towards freedom and the meaning he manages to impart to his acting, his writing, and his thievery. Thus even in his examples Sartre's normative judgments remain on an abstract, formal level where "ethical" behavior is praised because it corresponds to an account or definition of ethics as choice in accord with human freedom. Sartre's concern to articulate a "concrete ethics" and his insistence that no values stand apart from or prior to situated freedom result in an account of good and bad, right and wrong that is ultimately a metaethical account, according to which the right or the good is what accords with the conditions of ethical living in general.
5.1.2 Levinas

In describing Levinas' ethics, I focused on the responsibility that immediately confronts me as soon as I encounter the face of another and the way in which this "ethical situation" is a "command" of the Other. I discussed the idea that the command of the Other, which Levinas describes as a prohibition on murder or violence, is in fact a prohibition on approaching the Other as an object. I also discussed Levinas' claim that this prohibition is, somehow, meant to ground a practical order of justice wherein the anarchic role that intersubjectivity plays in grounding self-identity and reason is realized in action. Finally, I argued that despite the ambiguities surrounding the way in which the Levinasian prohibition on murder gives rise to an order of justice, one way to interpret the command is by focusing on the way in which this command not only restricts but also calls forth my freedom, such that justice for Levinas would be based on a normative structure within freedom. Throughout this discussion, I argued that Levinas' description of the relation with the Other as primordially ethical in fact constitutes an account of the foundations of ethics, even while I struggled to pursue Levinas' frequent comments to the effect that this relation does ground the rational order of justice and normative ethics. In thus arguing that Levinas' ethics constitute an ur-ethics, I have in fact already made the case that his account is a metaethics. However, because Joshua James Shaw's recent book on Levinas has forcefully raised the question as to whether Levinas in fact provides us with the outline of a normative ethics, I would like to revisit this matter briefly (Shaw 2008). Here I do not pretend to engage with all of the material in Shaw's bold and complex book; rather, I would simply like to introduce Shaw's argument as to why
Levinas' ethics are in fact rather more than metaethical and to situate my own account better in light of Shaw's position.

Shaw works to question the view that Levinas is largely or wholly restricted to metaethics. Shaw's main target is what he calls the "ineffability hypothesis", which is the idea that the face-to-face encounter primarily reveals the ineffability of the Other, or the fact that no concepts are appropriate or adequate to describe the Other and our relation with him. On the "ineffability hypothesis", the ineffability of the Other suggests that the face-to-face relation does not give rise to any determinate moral principles or rules, which would be rational, conceptual precepts; rather, these are available to us only after we agree to violate in some sense the absolute alterity of the Other by considering him in comparison to other others, which is to take up questions of justice that, as we have seen, Levinas considers to be in his sense post-ethical. In short, Shaw thinks the upshot of the ineffability hypothesis is that "we cannot specify a normative ethics without violating [Levinas'] claims about the other's transcendence" (56). In the interest of defending Levinas' relevance to normative ethics, however, Shaw resists this hypothesis, insisting that "the paucity of advice . . . on how to determine ethical conduct" that we find in Levinas' work is in fact no more problematic than the lack of such advice that we might find in the work of any ethical philosopher, such as, e.g., Kant, Moore, or Nagel (4-6). Asks Shaw,

Why not view Levinas as similar to these authors? His core ambition may not be to specify a comprehensive normative ethics, but he does reflect on the nature of ethical responsibility and the underlying concepts that define our view of ourselves as moral agents. He also indicates where previous ethical theories have erred . . . So, again, why not think of Levinas as having a similar approach to ethics as Kant's in the *Critique of Practical Reason*? . . . why not say that
Levinas's main aim is not to develop a normative ethics, but that nothing prevents us from developing one based on his remarks on ethical responsibility? (6)

According to Shaw, the ineffability hypothesis or something like it is explicit or implicit in much of the secondary literature on Levinas, including Richard Rorty's and Simon Crichley's work. Shaw thinks that in refusing to see that Levinas is in fact drawing the outline of a normative ethical theory, Levinas scholars have systematically misread him. Perhaps we might put the point, continuing the parallel with Kant, by saying that Shaw would think Levinas could quite consistently have written a *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* or a *Metaphysics of Morals* despite the fact that his actual works are more of a *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Shaw's argument against the ineffability hypothesis -- and here I summarize all-too-briefly his second chapter -- is that the hypothesis mistakenly presumes that what is revealed in the face-to-face encounter is the ineffability of the Other (i.e., an epistemological fact) whereas what is truly revealed is my moral responsibility (i.e., a moral fact). Those who hold the ineffability hypothesis therefore tend to see Levinas' ethical claims about infinite responsibility as stemming from this epistemological fact or experience of the Other's ineffability. Shaw argues that this gets things backwards; in truth it is the moral fact that grounds the epistemological one for Levinas. Shaw makes this point in part by focusing on Levinas' discussion of the impossibility of murder in *Totality and Infinity* -- a prohibition that, I should note, Shaw interprets much more literally than I do. As Shaw sees it, Levinas is a strong moral realist for whom moral facts can be known directly, and for whom epistemological facts about the way the Other eludes comprehension follow from the experience of others as "ethically precious" (56).
Shaw is certainly right to resist interpretations of Levinas' writings that divorce his work from the ethical considerations that were his primary interest. Similarly admirable is Shaw's concern to correct the mystification of the Other, according to which his ineffability would make ethics more a matter of ecstatic contemplation than of human action. That said, however, it should not be forgotten that Levinas himself thought of the ethical relation as a relation with infinity and referred to it as "religion". Shaw's concern, no doubt, is to take seriously Levinas' oft-quoted claim, in his interview with Phillipe Nemo, that "one can without doubt construct an ethics" from his philosophy (Ethics and Infinity 90). To take seriously this claim, however, we should not ignore the second half of it, wherein Levinas notes that the construction of an ethics in this sense "is not my own theme".

As is evident from my treatment of Levinas' ethics in Chapter 4, I take it that the face is immediately ethical; that is, I agree with Shaw when he points out that responsibility for the Other is not, for Levinas, a conclusion derived from an epistemological premise about the Other. Nevertheless the reason that Shaw is right here is not, as Shaw suggests, because an epistemological thesis regarding the inaccessibility follows from the primordial ethical experience, but because for Levinas there simply is no sharp line between ethics and the epistemology of the Other. In Totality and Infinity Levinas makes it clear that the "ethical event" that is the relationship with the Other is an epistemological and ontological event; it is the "primordial putting in common" that brings into being a world of things to be known, and this relationship occurs as a unique break within or amidst this experience of the world:
[T]he transcendence of the face is not enacted outside of the world, as though the economy by which separation is produced remained beneath a sort of beatific contemplation of the Other (which would thereby turn into the idolatry that brews in all contemplation). The 'vision' of the face as face is a certain mode of sojourning in a home, or -- to speak in a less singular fashion -- a certain form of economic life. (172)

This passage represents an example of exactly the sort of claim that supports Shaw in his fight against a noxious form of the "ineffability thesis" while at the same time challenging his suggestion that epistemic assumptions about the Other are derived from ethical claims. The Other is revealed in and through the constitution of intentional experience; thus, as Shaw would agree, we must take care not to imagine our vision of him as an otherworldly "beatific contemplation". Nevertheless, what is revealed is precisely "the transcendence of the face" or the "'vision'" of the face (my italics, Levinas' scare quotes). My point here is simply that for Levinas the way in which the Other manifests himself as well as the contrast between this transcendent mode of manifestation and the intentional mode in which worldly objects appear -- i.e., the 'epistemology' of the Other -- are always part-and-parcel of the description of the ethical encounter. While it is false to say that Levinas derives responsibility from the transcendence of the Other, it is just as false to suppose that responsibility precedes the transcendence of the Other or our experience of it. Both transcendence and responsibility are part of the "primordial donation" wherein the Other offers himself as an interlocutor, and both are, for Levinas, conditions of the birth of language that marks the hypostasis of the free, rational subject who makes judgments about what is just and unjust (174).

Thus Shaw is mistaken to think that the primacy or immediacy of the ethical in the encounter with the Other is any evidence that the transcendence of the Other is
secondary. This, I believe, is why he fails to recognize the sense in which Levinas clearly does espouse some version of the "ineffability hypothesis", or the idea that the Other's transcendence prevents us from capturing his value or defending his dignity in particular ethical norms. Such norms always universalize or generalize, subordinating the radical Other to a general rule; it is precisely because they do pose this threat of "tyranny" that Levinas takes pains in "Freedom and Command" to distinguish between rational impersonal law and the radically individual command that comes from the Other who institutes reason. Similarly, he establishes the framework of saying and said in Otherwise than Being not in order to gloss over the distinction between them nor to suggest that the order of justice flows unproblematically from the encounter with the Other, but rather to draw attention to the complex relationship between these orders: the said results from the saying but is always a step removed from it; justice houses ethical responsibility on a first-order level but also threatens to make us forget it. In describing the relation between the saying and the said, then, Levinas launches a full scale effort to defend both the legitimacy of the language we use to talk about the Other and the extent to which the Other in some way overflows or exceeds that language. This discussion, then, is not to be taken as a sign that a normative ethics can be readily constructed from Levinas' phenomenological ontology but rather as a sign that Levinas holds that first-order concerns of justice both reflect and betray the face.

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3 Leslie MacAvoy develops this point in a recent review of Shaw's book; see Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, 18 September 2009, http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=17427.

4 Catherine Chalier summarizes marvelously: "the impersonal law of rationality . . . still has a coefficient of violence since it knows nothing of people's faces: it approaches them 'from an angle,' on the basis of universal principles, ideas" (74).
In sum, the reason why a determinate normative ethics is lacking in Levinas' account is the same reason why the said never fully represents the saying, or, alternately why it is inappropriate to interpret the face's prohibition on murder as a first-order injunction: this saying, this prohibition, are not phenomena that appear but rather the conditions of intentional consciousness and normativity in general. Shaw rightly wants us to appreciate that Levinas is a "moral realist"; I would prefer to say that Levinas posits a unique and real phenomenality of ethical experience that is different from the phenomenality of other objects, facts, and events. This special phenomenality is the phenomenality of the Other, of my responsibility for him, and of the ethical self that is constituted in this relation; these are the things that "appear" an-archically, not moral facts or values as Shaw suggests. Hence Levinas' account remains a metaethical proposal about the conditions and ground of normative ethics. The account explains this ground by giving an account of the foundation of a subject qua hostage, therein explaining why an ethical subject is capable of discovering the Other in his dealings with others, of realizing that there is a normativity within his freedom, and of acting justly.

5.2 The social character of ethical freedom

In the previous section, I argued that the phenomenological ethics that Sartre and Levinas offer are predominantly metaethical accounts. The question can now be asked: are there any significant similarities between these metaethical accounts? If so, do these similarities stem from Sartre's and Levinas' phenomenology and is there any reason for supposing that their "phenomenological approach" to ethics is particularly attractive? In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that there are distinctive contributions of
phenomenological ethics. One of these, which I will discuss in this section, is that Sartre and Levinas both defend a thesis that I will call the sociality of ethical freedom, or the idea that ethics requires one's free will to be determined in part by relations with others. To be sure, the idea that community with others is required for subjectivity or selfhood in general is a notion developed by a wide array of philosophical traditions, and even the more particular idea that community with others provides the proper context for a good, successful, or *ethical* human life is, of course, not new to Sartre and Levinas. Nevertheless, their phenomenological approach encourages these philosophers to develop this general idea as the somewhat more robust claim that living ethically does not simply require me to respect others or meet their needs, but rather requires me to open myself to the other -- i.e., to be re-created in community with another such that his needs, goals, and projects determine my own. Here, any ethical exercise of my freedom involves at the same time, as it were, a sacrifice of egoistic independence to the other. Paying attention to the way in which Sartre and Levinas develop the way in which ethical freedom is realized in relation with others can give us a deeper appreciation of the way in which the social context of self-formation is particularly important to ethics.

Based on *Being and Nothingness* alone, it might be possible to make the mistake of supposing that authentic freedom for Sartre is freedom exercised in radical independence of others, their projects, needs, and demands. In particular, it might seem from the infamous section on "Concrete Relations" that for Sartre authentic living does not require recognizing or valuing the freedom of others -- and indeed, may at times require refusing to value their freedom, if it should challenge ours. To the contrary, however, as I have argued in Chapter 3, Sartre makes it clear in the *Notebooks* that others
do play a key and positive role in the genuinely authentic life of an individual who undergoes conversion and lives according the self-understanding made available to him by his pure reflection. Indeed, in the *Notebooks* Sartre even goes so far as to envision, as the goal of ethics, a community of individuals who have undergone conversion that is reminiscent of Kant's kingdom of ends. This vision of a community between others and the converted self comes out in the *Notebooks* even if it is not completely clear how the challenge posed by the Other in *Being and Nothingness* morphs into a mutual respect for freedoms in an ontology after conversion. Nevertheless, Sartre does stress in the *Notebooks* and in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* that the ethical life involves authentic respect for not only one's own freedom but also the freedom of others. In the *Notebooks* Sartre goes so far as to refer to a common end in which all oppression is ceased as a "city of ends" (e.g., *NE* 169-170). The vision of ethics as aiming at a universal situation is furthermore evidenced in Sartre's claim that conversion "will imply not just an internal change in me but a real change in the other"; hence, "One cannot be converted alone. In other words, ethics is not possible unless everyone is ethical" (*NE* 9). Insofar as the ultimate aim of ethics requires the conversion of both myself and others, then, Sartre is committed to holding that both they and I should come to understand ourselves authentically, and realize a concrete situation in which our freedoms and our fundamental projects determine values for which we together are responsible, even though these values are not transcendent or objective in the 'serious' sense (cf. *NE* 13).

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5 I am indebted to an essay by Thomas Anderson for this observation (Anderson 1997, 247). Anderson, however, discusses the link between Sartre's city of ends and the ideal of socialism, but does not explore Sartre's hesitation regarding the potentially totalizing and totalitarian implications of that sort of ideal.
Nevertheless, while it is true that the ethical life for Sartre involves the recognition of and respect for the freedom of others, he is also deeply suspicious of this ideal of a "city of ends", which, "in realizing the human totality, because each man becomes an end for all others and all others ends for him, in fact realizes totalitarianism" (NE 170). Sartre's hesitation regarding a "city of ends" seems to stem from the framework of *Being and Nothingness* -- that is, a framework wherein individual subjectivity is the primary locus of man's life and self-realization -- to which he remains committed even while he insists that the development of the subject is and must be reflected in his historically situated action. Indeed, in both *Existentialism Is a Humanism* and the *Notebooks*, one sees Sartre striving to defend the idea that relationship with free others, and respect for their freedom, is a necessary part of the ethical life, but also to make this point by keeping the focus on an individual's own reflection, conversion, and free self-realization. This point is made most clearly, perhaps, by the fact that Sartre defends the sociality that is essential to an ethical life primarily by proposing an account whereon the freedom of others becomes a value for the converted individual because of the role that others play in that individual's own reflective self-realization. Hence what I am calling the sociality of ethical freedom signifies, in Sartre, the fact that the free choices and projects that make up an ethical life are determined by the freedom, values, and projects of others. In the next few pages, I will explain this feature of Sartre's account in greater detail by defending the thesis that for Sartre, the freedom and projects of others matter in the ethical life of the converted individual because of the way in which others enable and fulfill an individual's own ethical self-understanding and authentic activity.
In the final section of Chapter 3, I argued that for Sartre the ethical life depends on others because others (1) help me understand myself and my situation, which in turn enables me to choose the fundamental goal(s) at which I direct my actions, (2) help to fix values objectively, or give the good "an outside", and (3) engage with me in the "creative" activity that is the result of my free choices. In order for another person to play all or any of these roles effectively in the life of an individual, that individual must acknowledge or recognize the freedom of that other and admit that his perspective plays a positive role in his own self-understanding. What is not clear, however, is why this recognition of the other's freedom, which could perhaps be imagined as a mere respect for his views and perspective insofar as I make use of these, requires that I value the other's freedom as such. Might it be possible for a converted individual to accept the truth about the relationship between his freedom, values, and fundamental project, and to engage with others in a creative formation of values and the world without explicitly valuing others' freedom or, for that matter, others themselves? It seems as though, on Sartre's account, the perspective of the other and the role he plays in allowing me to be authentically creative are important to the ethical life of a converted individual, while the other himself, his good, and his own ethical development are not much discussed.6

In fact, Sartre wants to reject this self-centered interpretation of the importance of the other for an ethical life, although whether his account of the role of other persons and one's own being-for-others after conversion will allow him to do so is another question.

6 Jonathan Webber makes this point nicely: "Recognising someone's freedom is not the same as respecting it. Respecting the freedom of enough people to secure one's own image, moreover, seems compatible with exploiting and oppressing many more. The descriptive claim that my public persona is partly constructed by other free beings, therefore, does not entail a general obligation to respect other people, despite what some commentators claim" (145).
As I also discussed in Chapter 3, in the *Notebooks* Sartre claims that after conversion I have a new concern for the fundamental projects of others and I will that my own projects be completed together with other persons in ways that treat them as ends rather than mere means. He furthermore talks about authentic love for the other, in which I "rejoice" in another's being-in-the-world (see Chapter 3, pp. 35-36). Meanwhile, in *Existentialism as a Humanism*, Sartre goes out of his way to explain that the individual "cannot be anything . . . unless others acknowledge him as such", which means that "my intimate discovery of myself is at the same time a revelation of the other as a freedom that confronts my own" (41). In making this claim, he implicitly acknowledges that the account of intersubjective relations in *Being and Nothingness*, according to which these relations seem to be inevitably subordinated to my fundamental project of becoming an *ens causa sui* and are therefore characterized by conflict, is inadequate for an account of authentic self-understanding. That is, while the original meaning of being-for-others may be conflict, the ethical conversion of an authentic individual requires the stable recognition of the other as a free subjectivity, since it is the other qua freedom who permits me to understand myself. More explicitly, Sartre claims,

I cannot set my own freedom as a goal without also setting the freedom of others as a goal. Consequently, when, operating on the level of complete authenticity, I have acknowledged that existence precedes essence, and that man is a free being who, under any circumstances, can only ever will his freedom, I have at the same time acknowledged that I must will the freedom of others. (*Existentialism Is a Humanism* 48-49)

In this passage Sartre asserts that authenticity necessarily involves valuing both one's own freedom and the freedom of others. In order to understand better Sartre's account of the significance that relations with others have for an ethical life, it will be important to
understand *why* this is so. What concerns me here is not so much Sartre's argument that the authentic individual must will his own freedom, which I discussed briefly in the last section, but rather Sartre's claim that authenticity requires valuing *others'* freedom.

Sartre's arguments for the claim that the authentic, or converted, individual must respect the freedom of others are neither abundant nor clear. As I have already explained, in the *Notebooks* Sartre focuses on the role that others play in the ethical life of the converted individual without explicitly explaining why or in what sense conversion leads one to value the freedom or fundamental projects of others in their own right. Nevertheless, as Thomas Anderson points out in a lucid and very helpful essay on the *Notebooks*, Sartre does suggest certain lines of reasoning that support this position.

Anderson re-constructs three such lines of reasoning that Sartre "appears to offer" for "why I should will the freedom of others and assist them in achieving their goals" (1997: 250).

The first reason for willing the freedom of others, according to Anderson, is that refusing to do so "by preferring my own freedom and its ends . . . implies that in the spirit of seriousness I take my values and goals as unconditional absolutes" (*Ibid.*). Recall that the spirit of seriousness, according to Sartre, is an attitude wherein we presume that our values are objective realities. Since in conversion an individual comes to accept that his own values are truly the result of his free projects, he rejects this attitude. This first reason is unconvincing, however, since refusing to consider my own freedom as though it were an absolute value hardly commits me to respecting the other's freedom in any robust sense. Further, as Anderson rightly points out, the basic assumption of the argument is
dubious; my decision to prefer my own freedom and values does not necessarily imply that I think these have an objective value.

The second way in which Sartre "seems to argue" is by asserting that "the natural result of one's comprehension of another is assistance of that other" (*Ibid.*). In my opinion, this is the way Sartre most commonly presents his position; comprehension, or authentic, post-conversion understanding of others as fellow free subjects, simply does entail respecting and assisting them. The problem with this "reason" is that it seems to re-formulate rather than explain the point to be defended -- i.e., that the ethical life involves valuing, respecting, and assisting others and their freedom. Asserting that this approach to the other is a natural result of conversion, perhaps because "comprehension . . . is a sympathetic engagement in the free project of the other", does not do much to explain why the converted individual who comprehends the other aright sympathetically engages with his projects in this way (*Ibid.*). Anderson, however, criticizes this second reason on different grounds. According to him, it simply seems too unlike Sartre to be plausible; it "ultimately rests on a very non-Sartrean notion of the presence of an original natural sympathy in human beings" (*Ibid.*). Here I think Anderson is attributing an additional premise to Sartre -- namely, that the natural result of comprehending another would be a basically emotional response. This allows him to explain the connection between comprehending others and assisting them at the cost of attributing to Sartre an idea that Anderson quite rightly notes is "very non-Satrean". I would prefer to say that Sartre generally leaves the connection between comprehension and respect/assistance problematically unclear. Nevertheless, regarding those places where Sartre does suggest that wanting, willing, or acting in a particular way is a natural or necessary outcome of
conversion, Anderson may be right to suggest that Sartre does uncharacteristically presume there are general rules governing the ways in which free individuals can choose to act.

Finally, the third reason that Sartre offers for why ethical living requires valuing the freedom of others rests on the fact that in pure reflection "we choose to value our free creativity in order to justify our existence and its creations" (Ibid. 251). Because "other freedoms also confer meaning and value on my life and world and, if the meaning they confer supports my freedom and its projects, this certainly enriches the solitary justification I have given myself" (Ibid.). Anderson holds that this last reason is Sartre's strongest argument. A different way to put this argument so as to shift the focus away from my own justification towards the significance of others' creativity in general would be to say that "to aid others' freedoms is in effect to will the maximum creation of meaning" in the world (Ibid.). Nevertheless, since my reason for willing this maximum creation of meaning is that it enriches and justifies my own free existence, it seems that this argument remains 'self-centered' in the sense -- not necessarily pejorative -- that the freedom of others is ultimately to be valued because of the role that their freedom plays in my own self-realization.

Indeed, it appears that both the first and third of these reasons for respecting the freedom and goals of others rely on the role that the other, his creativity, and/or his projects play in my own authentic self-realization. I value the other because doing so prevents me from regarding my own freedom as an absolute value (1), or because doing so helps me justify my own existence and projects (3). Meanwhile, the second line of reasoning -- Sartre's claim that respecting others just is a result of my authentic
comprehension of them as free subjects -- is more closely a restatement of his position that an ethical person will respect others than an explanation or justification of it. The closest Sartre comes to offering an other-focused reason for respecting the other is found in his stance, most evident in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, that authenticity requires a respect for freedom as such, which might in turn seem to entail a respect for the freedom of the other, or the other qua free. In fact, however, Sartre never puts things quite this way; that is, he never makes the ethical directive to respect freedom itself primary in such a way that respect for my freedom and that of others could be derived from it. Rather, on Sartre's ordering, the directive to create my own meaning and values in the world is primary, which entails that I must respect my own freedom, which in turn requires me to respect others, their freedom, and their projects. For Sartre, the imperative to respect my own freedom is more immediate than the imperative to respect the freedom of others because the former, as we have seen, follows logically or is a demand of 'consistency'; in contrast, our responsibility vis-à-vis others follows from this imperative to respect our own freedom and, especially in the *Notebooks*, is presented as not as a logically necessary demand of freedom itself, but rather as a contingent result that I discover in my encounters with others as part of the concrete, historical situations within which I attempt to pursue an ethical project. Hence Sartre's account goes something like this: once I have undergone conversion (or engage in pure reflection, or gain an authentic understanding of my freedom and situation), then as soon as I freely will anything I see that I must value my own freedom, which in practice, I discover, requires me to value the freedom of others.
To be sure, Sartre's discussion of this point in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* does seem to suggest that the need to respect the freedom of others is, like the requirement to value my own freedom, a logical conclusion of sorts, or a similar requirement of 'consistency'. Although "freedom as the definition of man does not depend on others", he writes there, "as soon as there is commitment I am obliged to will the freedom of others" (48). Even more forcefully, he suggests,

Consequently, when, operating on the level of complete authenticity, I have acknowledged that existence precedes essence, and that man is a free being who under any circumstances, can only ever will his freedom, I have at the same time acknowledged that I must will the freedom of others. (49)

Thus in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* it initially appears that the imperative of authenticity to value the freedom of others obligates us for basically the same reason that our need to value our own freedom -- i.e., it is simply more consistent to do so, as a logical point of sorts, since doing so accords with the facts of the human condition. This imprecise argument from consistency notwithstanding, it is clear that in *Notebooks for an Ethics* Sartre's focus is on the roles others play in my own free and creative self-realization, and that these roles are meant to provide reasons beyond mere logical consistency for why I ought to respect the freedom of others, practice generosity towards them, and generally enter in community with them. As I discussed at the end of Chapter 3, these roles involve facilitating my authentic self-understanding by allowing me to escape the objectification that would ordinarily be part of others' comprehension of me; giving freely chosen values their requisite "outside" -- i.e., their universal but not transcendent character; and cooperating with me in concrete, creative activity. This fuller description of the ethical significance of relations with others, as well as the fact that
Sartre keeps gesturing towards reasons other than 'consistency' to explain why we ought to respect the other, suggest that he was ultimately dissatisfied with the suggestion that a need to respect others' freedom just logically follows from authenticity or from my respect for my own freedom, and was therefore willing to propose a more elaborate account of the role others play in an ethical life.

That said, there is no reason to suppose that Sartre ever explicitly repudiated his earlier view. To the contrary, it may well be that Sartre continued to think that the need to respect the freedom of others followed as a logical point from my own authentic self-respect, but -- and here is the point I stress -- he also emphasizes that the need to respect others is an obligation, or a source of obligations, that is discovered as a fact once I begin to lead an authentic life and experience the role others play in my life and the relevance their freedom has for my actions. As a practical rather than a merely logical matter, I discover that I need others to realize the meaning of my own free projects and thereby justify my existence. Hence respect for others is rooted in what I would call the sociality of the ethical freedom, or the fact that the true realization of an individual's freedom is inextricably dependent on free others; this fact, of course, becomes available to individuals in the pure reflection that brings about the conversion to ethics.\footnote{On this point Beauvoir seems to be in agreement -- or rather, seems to experience similar struggles. In the Ethics of Ambiguity we find that "(t)o will oneself free and to will that there be being are one and the same choice" and that "both imply the bond of each man with all others" (70). It would be easy to read "imply" here as a logical relation, if it were not for the fact that Beauvoir goes on to support the need for this bond by arguing that "every man needs the freedom of other men" since "only the freedom of others keeps each one from hardening in the absurdity of facticity" (71). Again, she suggests that although it may seem "egotistical", the fact is that "Man can find a justification of his own existence only in the existence of other men" (72). Hence it seems we must value others and help them to be free, so that they can engage with me as my equals and help me to justify my existence. A similar argument is more explicit in Pyrrhus and Cineas, where Beauvoir argues that I am not capable of acting purely for the good of others, but that my conduct towards them nevertheless matters because I need others in order to help me realize my own goals by taking my ends as their own starting points (cf. 117-139). Thus, she writes, "I need
It may seem that in proposing that the freedom and goals of others are to be valued because of the role that others play in, or the goods they contribute to, the life of an individual under consideration, Sartre demeans others by making them means to my own ethical self-realization. Such an account, however, seems to be a natural result of taking the primary locus of ethics to be the conversion of the individual and his formation as an ethical subject, and this starting point seems to correspond correctly to the phenomenology of ethical living. Ethical obligations towards others don't simply appear, nor is it obvious that in order to be a good person I must value the freedom and goals of others in general. Rather, this fact and these obligations become evident upon reflection, as part-and-parcel of the project of self-formation I undertake when I reject certain goals as my fundamental and proximate ends and choose others instead -- if, that is, those new goals include authentically realizing myself as a free, creative human being. To admit this, then, should not be interpreted as degrading to others, since to undergo conversion and to live ethically are matters that concern first and foremost a particular individual, and there is no ethical theory -- not even Levinas\(^8\) -- that will manage to make ethics focused on the other in such a way that I am no longer primarily concerned with my own free choices, actions, and character. As Simone de Beauvoir explains in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*,

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\[^8\] Even for Levinas, the fact that responsibility begins in the face of the Other does not obviate the fact that ethics is a matter of the way in which this encounter makes *me* responsible for the Other, remakes *my* ethical self, and demands of *me* that I become a hostage to the Other.
It may perhaps be said that it is for himself that he is moral, and that such an attitude is egotistical. But there is no ethics against which this charge, which immediately destroys itself, can not be leveled; for how can I worry about what does not concern me? I concern others and they concern me. There we have an irreducible truth. The me-others relationship is as indissoluble as the subject-object relationship. (72)

The point here is that it is no real problem for an ethics to suggest that being moral is in some sense 'egotistical', whether by that we mean primarily tending towards the good of the individual himself or primarily concerning the individual himself rather than others themselves. This charge is self-destroying both because ethics must be about me -- "how can I worry about what does not concern me?" -- and because, given the indissolubility of the "me-others relationship", any seemingly egotistical ethics will (or at least should) lead to a consideration of others as well.

Such, at any rate, is clearly the case with Sartre's ethics, which remain 'egotistical' in the sense of focusing on the individual as the primary locus of ethical conversion and obligation. It is through an individual's pure reflection -- his own understanding of himself and his freedom -- that authentic free activity becomes possible, and it is in his post-conversion pursuit of a fundamental project other than the causa sui that his values can be created and realized. Yet at the same time this focus on the conversion of an individual and the significance of his own free self-projection sits comfortably with thesis that ethical freedom has an inescapably social character since, for Sartre, this social character is rooted in the fact that others play a role within the conversion and concrete ethical self-projection of an individual. Thus, for Sartre, the individual after conversion values and must value others because and insofar as he appreciates their 'objective' perspective and experiences them as co-creators of his ethical self, partners in the
determination and realization of an authentic fundamental project. Without providing an account of how this sociality within ethical freedom would be realized in various concrete situations or a rule according to which this notion could be applied, Sartre nevertheless proposes in the *Notebooks* that after the conversion to ethics my will is determined by values that are not chosen solely by me but rather along with others and as part of the free projects that they pursue. Allowing my freedom to be guided by the freedom of others and valuing others because I understand the role they play in this co-creation of human meaning are key elements of authentic freedom according to Sartre.

Having thus explained what I mean by asserting that Sartre proposes that the ethical exercise of freedom has an inextricably social component, in the remainder of this section I would like to explain why I think the same must be said of Levinas, who even more explicitly emphasizes the role that the Other plays in determining any ethical exercise of the will. For Levinas, however, this does not mean that I value others because of the role that they play in making possible my ethical self-determination, as it does in Sartre. Rather for Levinas it is because the Other is the revelation of the supreme Good that he is the source of normativity in general and therefore determines my ethical choices. Indeed, for Levinas it is only insofar as the Other calls forth my free will that values in general arise and ethical decision-making becomes possible. Thus for Levinas as for Sartre the sociality of ethical freedom is a necessary feature of ethics, since letting my will be determined through the call of the Other and the meanings constituted by my relation to him is the prerequisite for any first-order system of justice. Indeed, for Levinas this sociality of freedom is not only necessary but sufficient for ethics, since for him to be ethical just is to open oneself and sacrifice one's freedom (i.e., one's "freedom of play") to
the Other. This is why ethics is thematized as the state of being a hostage to the other, the state in which one refuses the temptation to live as though one were a separated self and lives in accord with one's true nature as a socially constituted self. Furthermore, Levinas is unwilling to imagine, as Sartre does in *Being and Nothingness*, that there could be a pre-ethical or purely autonomous exercise of freedom. As I've argued in previous chapters, Levinas claims that the origin of the ethical subject just is the origin of the subject as such, and that the responsibility for the Other is an immediately experienced basis for normative judgments in general. Hence on his account there simply could not be a rational will operating independently from the command of the Other. Here I will not rehearse those arguments; I take it that by this point we are familiar with at least some of the thematic ways in which Levinas rejects the very notion of a self that would be actually independent from the sociality of the Other. Rather, because Levinas so often stresses that the radical alterity of the Other is what gives him his capacity to command, what will be helpful here is to distinguish the way Levinas thinks that this unique sociality rightly determines the exercise of ethical freedom from a way in which freedom's placid obedience to an external authority is actually an unethical violation of freedom.

Recall that for Levinas, the will originates in the an-archic manifestation of the face and the normativity within freedom that follows from this encounter; this in turn means that an ethical life must be what he calls a "life of freedom in heteronomy", or a life wherein my freedom opens itself and questions itself before the Other and his needs ("Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" 58). Broadly, then, the ethical exercise of the will is essentially social in the sense that freedom cannot be used to choose the good except
on the basis of an initiative coming from a transcendent Other. That Levinas uses the
term "heteronomy" is not accidental here; ethical freedom is not first and foremost my
capacity to will and act, but rather the capacity whereby I respond to the Other.

If, however, in "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" Levinas maintains that the
sociality of ethical freedom can be described as a heteronomy of the will, one should not
simply gloss over the fact that in an essay published just a few years before, "Freedom
and Command", he explicitly rejects what he calls tyrannical heteronomy. Catherine
Chalier draws this contrast between two types of heteronomy nicely; here she begins by
quoting Levinas on tyrannical heteronomy:

"True heteronomy begins when obedience ceases to be an obedient conscience
and becomes a propensity. The supreme violence lies in that supreme mildness." .
. . Levinas shows no indulgence for that formidable heteronomy or for the
masochism that often accompanies it: that heteronomy is to be combated outside
oneself and within oneself. (73)

The heteronomy against which Levinas warns in "Freedom and Command" is tyranny
because it does not call forth or enable freedom but rather stifles it. As he points out,
tyranny may come from a clearly external source, as when a leader issues an absurd order
or an order that degrades the free being at whom it is directed; alternately, it may seem to
come from within, when a person has allowed himself to become so servile that his action
no longer stems from his own freedom. By contrast to this heteronomy, Levinas states
that "the apparent heteronomy of a command" -- i.e., the command of the Other -- "is in

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9 Here I retain Levinas' text as it appears in the translation of Chalier by Jane Marie Todd. Lingis'
"Freedom and Command", from which I usually quote, reads: "True heteronomy begins when obedience
ceases to be obedient consciousness and becomes an inclination. The supreme violence is in that supreme
gentleness" (16).
reality but an autonomy" ("Freedom and Command" 15). This is because the command to ethical responsibility is, according to Levinas, a condition of autonomy; it limits or places demands on freedom only insofar as it actually establishes the ethical self as rational and free. To put the point another way, we might say that tyrannical heteronomy subordinates one to another, destroying the society between two persons and hindering the possibility of free action, while the command of the Other establishes society and thereby enables a situation wherein the will is both truly free and truly ethical, an 'autonomous' hostage to the Other.

This is why it is ultimately not difficult to square Levinas' careful condemnation of tyrannical heteronomy in "Freedom and Command" with his warm and unqualified approval of "the life of freedom in heteronomy" found in "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity", which I discussed in Chapter 4 (58; Cf. Chapter 4, §3). Clearly, Levinas does not mean to contradict his earlier indictment of tyranny when he recommends a life wherein freedom always puts itself into question. Rather, he wants to explain that the Other is a "privileged heteronomy", since his command "does not clash with freedom but invests it" (*TI* 88). If we want to explain why the heteronomy of the Other is "privileged", we should point to Levinas' claim that this is a heteronomy *within* the self. Thus this heteronomy is not like the masochistic heteronomy that is realized when a free being enslaves himself to a tyrant through his unthinking obedience. Rather, it is a heteronomy discovered within freedom and reason, or discovered as the fact that the self is a hostage to the Other prior to any positive decision and because of the way in which it is constituted.
In "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" Levinas acknowledges that his "thesis of heteronomy"

breaks with a very venerable tradition. But, on the other hand, the situation in which one is not alone is not reducible to the fortunate meeting of fraternal souls that greet one another and converse. This situation is the moral conscience, the exposedness of my freedom to the judgment of the other. It is a disalignment which has authorized us to catch sight of the dimension of height and the ideal in the gaze of him to whom justice is due. (59)

Thus the ethical life is a life of freedom in heteronomy because my freedom is, as Levinas puts it, 'exposed' to the judgment of the other. As I would like to put it, ethical freedom is freedom in sociality; ethical reasons for acting do not and cannot come from the individual alone nor from his solitary reason, no matter how carefully he reasons regarding what course of action might bring about the most good nor what he can will that anyone ought to do in his situation. On the contrary, both Sartre and Levinas insist that ethics involves responding to the demands of actual others; hence my relations with them and the values that those relations create and sustain will be the ones that determine what actions and intentions are and are not ethical, in the first order sense. Ethics intrinsically involves the allowing one's freedom to be determined in sociality; without others, we are not up to the task.

5.3 Sociality, ethical self-construction, and phenomenology

While Sartre and Levinas surely do not share precisely the same account of how ethical freedom is determined by relations with others, I have argued that they do share a positive assessment of the way in which ethical freedom essentially depends on the society of others. This makes them different from ethical philosophers who think that
relations with others are usually advantageous for personal ethical development (e.g., Aristotle), but who do not hold that encountering others is a necessary prerequisite for the exercise of ethical freedom as such. Similarly, their account is much stronger than the popular but imprecise opinion that good relationships with others are generally important for ethical living. Nevertheless, it seems to me that non-phenomenologists could in principle share Sartre's or Levinas' views on the significance of relations with others for ethics, so when I claim that the view is distinctive I do not mean to suggest that it is exclusively theirs; rather I want to draw attention to the fact that this is an important feature of their phenomenological ethics that does seem to set them apart from certain other ethical theories.

In earlier chapters, I discussed another feature that I believe is also distinctive in this sense. There, I offered an account of the phenomenological ontology that grounds their ethics and explained that for both Sartre and Levinas becoming ethical is a matter of self-construction that involves a change in the structure of the self. Sartre presents this change as an alteration in one's being-for-Others and the adoption of a new fundamental project while Levinas describes it as the very birth of the subject, wherein I become a "hostage" to the Other. Certainly the idea that ethics is about a change in the self is not unique to Sartre and Levinas; for example, virtue ethicists from Aristotle to MacIntyre and beyond depend on the idea that ethics is basically a matter of an individual becoming more virtuous as a result of his choices, circumstances, and actions. Nevertheless, in suggesting that ethics is not at its foundation about maximizing good, instantiating the Good, following the dictates of universal human reason, ceasing to experience pain, or getting into Heaven, Sartre and Levinas do set themselves apart from a variety of ancient
and modern ethical theories and align themselves with philosophers whose metaethical accounts describe ethical activity as activity that makes a human person most fully what he is or ought to be. The ethical accounts with which Sartre and Levinas present us are not descriptions of an absolute good to be realized but rather models of the good person, or the individual who pursues what might be justly thought of as the "good life": the authentic man who chooses and pursues his fundamental project, respecting his own freedom and that of others, or the hostage who opens himself to the command of the Other. Would it be implausible to imagine these models of the good life as descriptions of the sort of activity that constitutes a new human *telos*?

This parallel with virtue ethics, however, can only be pushed so far. After all, for Sartre and Levinas what the human person is and who he ought to be are questions to be answered from the starting point of individual conscious experience, not from the starting point of metaphysics or natural philosophy, nor from the starting point of rational consensus within particular human communities. In this, perhaps, Sartre and Levinas best reveal their phenomenological lineage -- in particular, their preference for avoiding metaphysical assumptions that do not immediately stem from or explain conscious experience. Ethical normativity is a particular sort of meaning, and meaning for them is constituted within the individual consciousness. Thus, if we want an account of how ethical norms are not merely subjective, we must explain, as Sartre and Levinas do, how objective meanings are discovered within my individual consciousness. Their explanation is that norms in general, like all meaning, are interpersonally constituted; while the details as to how this occurs differ in Sartre and Levinas, both agree that it is by describing the way in which this intersubjective constitution occurs -- i.e., the way in
which my freedom is determined in sociality with others -- that we can explain who the
human person is meant to be without appealing a universal human nature or essence. For
these philosophers, the ethical ideal is a self who has been constituted properly, where the
source of the propriety here is a story about how the self is created in relation to others,
which reveals how objective norms find their way into consciousness and are discovered
there. Thus for Sartre ethics is a matter of being authentically converted while for
Levinas it is a matter of being wholly responsible for the Other,\textsuperscript{10} while for both the goal
at which ethics aims is an ideal constitution of the self that is described starting from the
standpoint of conscious experience. In each case, \textit{ethics is a matter of dynamic self-
creation}, or re-creation -- a proposal, I would suggest, that each philosopher derives from
his investigations into the phenomenology of the self, normativity and value, and the
relation between the self and others.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} It is interesting to note that the event that inaugurates ethics is thus, for Levinas, an encounter
that is always already a part of the conscious self, while for Sartre it is a conversion that I may or may not
undergo. This makes it look as though for Sartre, but not for Levinas, there is a real possibility of living
pre- or \textit{a-}ethically. (Contrast, e.g., the life of enjoyment in Levinas, which 'occurs' prior to the encounter
with another, but which is most plausibly read as a logical abstraction rather than a real possibility -- a
discussion of what the self would be like apart from the encounter with the Other.)

That said, for Sartre an individual who fails to engage in authentic reflection and undergo
conversion is in "bad faith". This label, as we have seen, has ethical connotations, which suggests that even
prior to conversion an individual can be culpable, or capable of \textit{unethical} behavior. Might this again
suggest that there is a normativity within freedom -- that is, that the free individual is directed towards
conversion and authentic life, in such a way that we could hold him culpable for failing to realize this
possibility?

\textsuperscript{11} It is in light of Sartre's theory in particular that I stress that ethics is a \textit{dynamic} creation of a the
self. The metaethical account that Sartre proposes is very much a description of ethical \textit{activity} in the
world, or an account of what it is to live authentically. Sartre is concerned to reject explicitly any account
of ethics that proposes that we ought "to do the good in order to be moral" if by this one suggests that
"[m]orality becomes a certain mode of ontological being, even something metaphysical in that we have to
attain it" (\textit{NE} 3). This does not mean, of course, that for Sartre there is no link between doing and being, or
between free choices and what a man is; indeed, it is characteristic of Sartre's philosophy to insist that we
make ourselves what we are precisely through our free activity. What it does mean is that concrete ethics
cannot be imagined as the pursuit of a stable goal or transcendent value -- where the real target is some
ideal human nature. The ethical life, like the values that are constituted in interpersonal relations, is realized

257
Similarly, I would also suggest that each philosopher's focus on the sociality that is endemic to ethical freedom is also a result of his phenomenological approach. As I have already said, it may well be that nothing would prevent a philosopher who is not a phenomenologist from reaching similar conclusions to Sartre or Levinas regarding the role that others play in founding ethical normativity and shaping authentic freedom. It is nevertheless clear that Sartre and Levinas reach their conclusions by means that are phenomenological, in the broad sense of the term that I outlined in Chapter 1. There, I argued that Sartre and Levinas are phenomenologists most especially in that they take individual conscious experience as a starting point, describe carefully the foundations of the correlation between subject and object, and adopt and modify the Husserlian notion of intentionality in order to describe and analyze human experience. Now we are in a position to see how this phenomenological method is evidenced in their ethics.

Levinas, for example, posits that true freedom is my responsibility for another because he looks within conscious experience and finds what he takes to be evidence for this claim: that the origin of values must come from a source that is inadequately captured by the categories and intentional mode of conscious experience; that this source manifests itself with a unique phenomenality as the "face" of the Other, or a 'saying' that is presupposed in intersubjective experience; that reason alone insufficiently explains how freedom is used to choose the good, while the meaning introduced by an encounter with the Other does explain this; and so on. All of these are, for Levinas, phenomenological observations, stemming from an attempt to describe freedom,
responsibility, and the Other by paying attention to the special phenomenality of these realities and the type of intentionality with which the conscious subject can (or cannot) approach them.

Similarly, Sartre argues that ethics will involve valuing the freedom of others in such a way that my own free choices come to depend on their projects, and he does so based on his phenomenological investigations into the way that concrete relations with others structure the self prior to and following conversion. For both Sartre and Levinas the sociality that determines ethical action is a postulate that follows from the phenomenality of freedom. This freedom, when ethically exercised, simply is not lived as a capacity to choose impartially between alternatives nor to will the good without reference to the demands of others. Rather, ethical freedom involves being drawn towards right relations with others, becoming capable of overcoming my own self-centered desires, and choosing to act in ways that will realize the dignity of myself and others in an explicitly intersubjective context.

This, then, is the inheritance left to us by phenomenological ethics: an account of ethical freedom as the active realization of human values in relations with others and a model of ethics as the re-creation of the self. Surely the limitations of these metaethical conclusions are frustrating; we find ourselves wanting to know how in this or that particular situation, the self would become ethical -- how it would choose its freedom as part of its historical situation or would be realized as the hostage of the Other. Nevertheless the inheritance of phenomenological ethics is not a paltry one, and the broad outlines of ethics that Sartre and Levinas propose is attractive.
It is attractive, firstly, because it rightly suggests that ethical behavior cannot be determined or described without considering the relationship of a moral agent to other persons; that is, I am what we might call *ethically incomplete* without others and without right relation to them. This sort of picture speaks powerfully against any suggestion that the right reasoning or good will of the solitary individual constitutes his moral good -- or, rather, it points out that such suggestions might overlook the way in which others provide us with the meanings that make reasoning possible and the values that make our free will capable of choosing good. Those familiar only with a popular version of Sartre's and Levinas' philosophy may suppose that Levinas insists on the role of the Other in ethics more forcefully than Sartre does. Indeed, it is true that Levinas sometimes makes the Other seem so important that it would be possible to forget that the description of the encounter with the Other is a story wherein I remain the main character; I am the one who is made responsible, given freedom to do good, and invited to become ethical. Yet as we have seen, Sartre in *Notebooks for an Ethics* clearly grapples for a way to articulate what he takes to be the key role of the other in enabling the creativity that marks all human action. Ethical activity involves the "creation" of oneself, of values, and of the world; and creation only takes on meaning "in the setting of the other" (*NE* 126-7, 128). Thus while Sartre is not willing to say that the other, like Levinas' Other, is the source of all value and meaning, he does make the meaning and value furnished by the other a condition of ethics.

Sartre's and Levinas' ethics are attractive, secondly, not only because they remind us to consider a person's relation with others as foundational to his ethical freedom but also because they do this while remaining committed to the idea that freedom imparts a
special dignity to the human and that ethics would be a matter of realizing this dignity. It is in this respect that we might speak of Sartre and Levinas, as each spoke of himself, as humanists in some sense. Sartre's commitment to a dignity of the human that does not rely on a transcendent human nature is perhaps more obvious than Levinas'; he claims straightforwardly in "Existentialism Is a Humanism" to be proposing a philosophy that focuses on man's capacity for free action and his commitment to his own freedom not merely because these are the ur-situation to which he is condemned but also because they are the greatness of man. Levinas too, however, stresses that the "enslavement" enacted by the "seizure by the good" is the way in which "the obedient finds his integrity" ("Humanism and Anarchy" 53). In a footnote, he positively appropriates Sartre's idea that we are condemned to freedom: "But Sartre spoke of the subject condemned to freedom. The sense of that condemnation is described in the following pages" (Ibid. 73). Looking at the body of the text, what Levinas is suggesting is that the way to understand this 'condemnation' is as the "seizure" wherein I become responsible for the Other (52). It is on the basis of that condemnation or this seizure that man becomes free, and so, as for Sartre, it is a condemnation that realizes the unique meaning and dignity of a human person -- namely, his freedom and his responsibility. Also like Sartre, Levinas rejects the idea that the dignity of man could be explained in terms of a nature or essence: "Modern anti-humanism is undoubtedly right", states Levinas, "in not finding in man taken as individual of a genus or an ontological reason . . . a privilege that makes him the aim of all reality" (Ibid. 56). Rather, outside of ontology the meaning of the human takes place as the exercise of true freedom, as the opening of the self to the Other, and as the recognition that the solitary ego is not properly a human self at all. It is because human
existence thus does have an absolute meaning deriving from the an-archiec relation with the Other, Levinas suggests, that modern anti-humanism is also, in a different sense, wrong (Ibid. 57).

Perhaps in conclusion it is best to think of these phenomenological ethics as proposing to us what we might call, following Levinas, a "humanism of the Other" ("Humanisme de l'autre homme"\textsuperscript{12}). It is a sign of how problematic the term humanism is for Levinas that even as he proposes this humanism of the Other he aligns himself also with "the idea of the defense of man understood as defense of the man other than me" that "presides over what is called in our day the critique of humanism" ("Without Identity" 68-9). Nevertheless, he suggests, this critique of humanism "showed itself as the humanity of man" (Ibid. 69). With 1968 in mind, Levinas characterizes this manifestation of the human as "young": "[t]his adjective indicates the surplus of sense over the being that carries it and claims to measure and restrain it" (Ibid.). While the term thus serves as one more metaphor for the phenomenality of excess that characterizes the Other, it also conjures up the feeling of reckless naïveté and hyperbolic resolve that mark not only Levinas' but also Sartre's account of ethics; what else are infinite responsibility and radical freedom if not dreams of youth? In youth, suggests Levinas, "[t]he vague notion of authenticity, so oft abused, took precise meaning" (Ibid.). Thus Levinas again appropriates a Sartrean term, describing authenticity as "a taking charge of one's fellow man that comes from human vulnerability" (Ibid.). Sartre would approve, I think, because Levinas' authenticity, though revisionary, amounts to an phenomenological ethics that, 

\textsuperscript{12} This was the title under which Levinas republished, in 1972, his essays "Signification and Sense", "Humanism and An-archy", and "Without Identity".
like Sartre's, envisions the responsibility for others as a fundamental disturbance of self-satisfied consciousness that thereafter finds its dignity in responding to and sharing in the world proposed by those others. It is in rejecting the idea of a subjectivity that could "close itself in" that Sartre and Levinas can style their ethics as anti-humanisms, while it is in proposing that freedom and responsibility, as lived in relationship with other persons, realize man's true dignity that they can also style themselves as humanists (Ibid. 68).

Thus, if in the preceding pages I have downplayed the differences between Sartre and Levinas and pursued their points of agreement, it is with this justification: together they stand for an ethics that insists on proposing itself as an account of the dignity of man and which, despite its metaethical character, distinguishes itself from any philosophy or anthropology that would seek to the minimize what is, for Sartre and Levinas, the ineliminable starting point of consciousness and the drama of self-formation that is at the heart of concrete ethics. That this drama is not the unfolding of human nature is no sign that there is, for these thinkers, no longer any "human" as such, nor any universal normative structure against which choices and lives could be measured. Rather, each locates the source of meaning and value in the relationship between consciousness and its experience of what is transcendent to it, and proposes that the task of emptying out the self so as to become a new man is the activity of an ethical life.
Sartre


Essays


Levinas

(EE)  


(OB)  

(TIH)  


(TI)  


**Essays**


265


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