Prolegomena to an Ethics: Ontologizing the Ethics of Max Scheler and Emmanuel Levinas

Zachary Willcutt

A dissertation

submitted to the Faculty of

the department of philosophy

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

March, 2021

To Rachel

Prolegomena to an Ethics: Ontologizing the Ethics of Max Scheler and Emmanuel Levinas

Zachary Willcutt

Advisor: Richard Kearney, Ph.D.

This dissertation investigates the possibility of a renewed phenomenological ethics that would ground ethics in the structure of lived experience, so that daily existence is ethically informative and the good is located in the concrete, heartfelt affairs of dwelling in the world with others. Thus far, phenomenological ethics has been deeply influenced by the two schools of Max Scheler's value ethics and Emmanuel Levinas' alterity ethics, both of which I argue share a fundamental point of contact in what I am calling Deep Kantianism. That is, phenomenological ethics has been haunted by Immanuel Kant's non-phenomenological divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness, ontology and ethics. In response, I will suggest a new point of departure for phenomenological ethics beginning with the originary unity of being and goodness as revealed by the love that moves the self beyond herself toward her ground in the other person.

Chapter One seeks to establish and identify the problem of Deep Kantianism, or explain what exactly Deep Kantianism is according to its origins. Kant begins his ethics with Hume's assumption that being and goodness, is and ought, are separate. The implications of this divide threaten to reduce being to bare being without ethical import and to convert the good into an abstract shadow that is irrelevant to the situations of daily life.

Chapter Two examines how Scheler in his value ethics shows against Kant that the ethical is only experienced by a being with a heart. The source of normativity is

revealed and known through affectivity. However, this insight is troubled by Scheler's distinction between values and bearers of value that repeats the Kantian distinction between nature and freedom, respectively.

Chapter Three focuses on Scheler's prioritization of love as the fundamental affect of the heart and person in its moving the person outside of herself, a movement that constitutes the person as such. However, this love turns out to not be for the sake of the person but for the value-essence that she bears, again placing the ethical with Kant outside of the realm of Being.

Chapter Four begins with Levinas' discovery that ethics is constituted by the relation to the Other, an ethical relation that is the first relation before any ontological relation, indicating that the self is responsible for the Other. Yet Levinas here is haunted by Deep Kantianism in his denigration of affectivity, which for him is an egoist return to the self that excludes the Other.

Chapter Five argues that Levinas' ethics is permeated by an abyssal nothingness that is exhibited in the destitution of the Other in *Totality and Infinity* and the passivity of the self in *Otherwise than Being*. The nothingness that permeates the ethical relation hints at the necessity of a return to the ontological, suggesting that ontology is not, as Levinas maintains following Kant, devoid of ethical implications.

Chapter Six turns to Martin Heidegger in his retrieval of a pre-Kantian *pathos* through his readings of Augustine and Aristotle. This *pathos* suggests that affectivity is always already oriented toward the things and persons of the world in a way that reveals what is conducive and detrimental to one's Being, implying a notion of what is good and bad for one's Being, which Heidegger leaves undeveloped.

Chapter Seven conducts a phenomenology of the ground of ethics that is informed by the discoveries made by Scheler, Levinas, and Heidegger. The self begins as constituted by a nothing, demanding that it move outside of itself in the exteriorization of love. This exteriorization directs the self to the concrete other person, the thou, who is revealed to be both the Good and Being as the proper end of love, indicating that the self is constituted by Being-for-the-Other.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beyond Boston College, I owe special thanks to Frank Scalambrino, who has been a constant mentor and friend since I first entered his classroom. Through a paper that I wrote for his *Ethics* class—nearly seven years ago now—the notion of rethinking the relation between Being and the Good first came to me. His words have always provoked me to think more deeply and inspired me with new energy to push further into the richness of existence.

I would also like to thank my students, both within and outside of Boston College, for their inspiration. Since philosophy is a task that is for others, being able to think through the questions of daily heartfelt existence with them in the classroom has helped me more than they know.

And finally, I must give the greatest thanks to my wife Rachel, who through her love and patience during my time as a doctoral student has exemplified the genuine meaning of charity and care. This dissertation would not have been possible without her, or her love. To her, I owe the most—her love has worked its way onto every page of the following work.

Introduction

My love is my weight! I am borne about by it, wheresoever I am borne.
Augustine, *Confessions* 13.9.10

There is no love where nothing is being loved.
Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 9.2.2

Love is a kind of motion, and…there is no motion except it be toward something.
Augustine, *Eighty-three Different Questions*, 35.1

Bodily pain in any animate creature is itself a great and wonderful power of the soul…the pain it [the soul] feels means, if I may so put it, that it is not indifferent to the organism being spoiled or broken up, but reacts to this with indignation.
Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 3.16.25

Phenomenology and Ethics: Married or Divorced?

The tradition of phenomenological ethics was inaugurated by the monumental work of Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*. There, beginning in 1913, 13 years after Edmund Husserl published *Logical Investigations*, and being brought to completion in 1916, the phenomenological method was for the first time applied to the domain of the ethical.[1] According to this investigation, the ethical is located in the domain of "values" as "*clearly feelable phenomena*."[2] Thus, the founding school of phenomenological ethics is value ethics, in which the source of normativity is constituted by values that are disclosed through feeling. Besides its founder Scheler, the other most significant figures in value ethics are Dietrich von Hildebrand and Nicolai Hartmann. From these early beginnings, phenomenological ethics did not depart for nearly half a century. Only in 1961 with the publication of *Totality and Infinity* was

---

[1] Initially, the first part of *Formalism* was published in 1913 and then the second part in 1916, both times in the *Jahrbuch fur Philosophie and Phänomenologische Forschung*, yet the work only appeared as a whole for the first time in 1916.
[2] *Formalism*, 16.

value ethics joined by a different account of phenomenological ethics in which Emmanuel Levinas used the phenomenological method to argue that "the ethical exigency of the face" "puts into question the consciousness that welcomes it. The consciousness of obligation is no longer a consciousness, since it tears consciousness up from its center, submitting it to the Other."[3] The challenge to the priority of the self reveals that "preexisting the plane of ontology is the ethical plane."[4] In the face-to-face encounter with the concrete human Other, ethical obligation arises, prior to any other relation. The first relation is the ethical relation, the relation to the Other, to whom I am always already obligated to respond. Thus, the source of normativity is constituted by the responsibility for the Other, making Levinas' ethics an alterity ethics. Most notably, this school of phenomenological ethics has influenced figures outside or at the fringes of the phenomenological movement as such, including Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur. Together, the movements of value ethics and alterity ethics characterize the field of phenomenological ethics. In the words of Sophie Loidolt, "[t]he most salient and influential representatives of a phenomenological approach to ethics" are "Max Scheler and the group of value ethicists in early phenomenology" and "Emmanuel Levinas," who represent the "two different strands in phenomenological ethics: value ethics on the one hand, and alterity-ethics on the other."[5]

The existence of these two schools and the development of a school of phenomenological ethics since nearly the beginning of phenomenology itself would seem to refute the charge that as characterized but not accepted by Francois Raffoul "post-

---

[3] *Totality and Infinity*, 207.
[4] Ibid., 201.
[5] Loidolt 2017, 1-2.

Nietzschean continental thought has little to offer in terms of an ethical theory," and as similarly pointed out—though once again opposed—by Loidolt that "the question might arise if ethics is such an important topic in the history of phenomenology after all."[6] But the fact that this charge has been made, even if the charge itself is not true, suggests that there might be something within phenomenology that motivates the charge, that leaves phenomenology open to the charge that it might have little space for ethical thinking. For among the luminaries of phenomenology, philosophers of the caliber of Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, none of these published an ethics, and Heidegger is famed for explicitly rejecting ethical questioning.

This would seem to be an unusual feature of phenomenological philosophy, given that historically the philosophical task has been permeated by ethical considerations. According to the teaching of the Epicureans, "[e]mpty is the argument of the philosopher by which no human disease is healed; for just as there is no benefit in medicine if it does not drive out bodily diseases, so there is no benefit in philosophy if it does not drive out the disease of the soul."[7] Philosophy is fundamentally a healing, therapeutic activity that improves the lives of those who participate in its endeavors. What makes a claim genuinely philosophical in this view is how it can cure the soul of its illnesses; in other words, the philosophical is that which illuminates how to live and how to live better. That is, philosophy is always already ethical. All true philosophy will have as its goal and measure its ability to concretely help persons. Philosophy is therapy—philosophy is

---

[6] Raffoul 2010, 2; Loidolt 2017, 1. To again clarify the position promoted by these statements, I must emphasize that such position is hardly Raffoul's or Loidolt's own, but in both cases is the clear articulation of a common charge against continental and phenomenological thought, to which Raffoul and Loidolt are responding.

[7] Porphyry, *To Marcella* 31, in *Hellenistic Philosophy*, edited by Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson.

ethics. This view that was most clearly stated by the Epicureans was common to the whole of ancient and medieval philosophy. Philosophers were intrinsically concerned with how to live one's life, making philosophy itself a way of life that concretely benefits those who practice it and are open to its practices. To be philosophical is to think about how one may live the good life, how one might find the good. For Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Sextus Empiricus, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Scotus, Eckhart, and Ockham, the act of philosophy was directed by the challenge of thinking through the ethical, in which one philosophizes for the sake of living the good life, and helping others attain the good life. For the ancients and medievals, philosophy can never escape its therapeutic, ethical vocation.

This inherently ethical vocation of philosophy begins to change with Descartes, who redefines the principle philosophical task as the establishment of "a firm and abiding superstructure in the sciences."[8] Instead of being a concrete way of life that searches for the good life, philosophy is supposed to construct the foundations of science. Descartes transforms the philosophical endeavor into a question of having certain knowledge through which the basis for the modern sciences of the material world will be provided. Since the main goal of philosophy is to provide such a basis, it is not primarily concerned with ethical questioning. The ethical vocation is displaced and of secondary importance, an assumption that leads Descartes to not investigate the ethical. Though after him, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, and many others do return to the ethical, they approach it as subsequent to the primary task of founding and developing scientific knowledge, a rather different approach than had been the case for the ancients and medievals. Perhaps as a

---

[8] *Meditations*, 74, in *A Discourse on Method, Meditations, and Principles*.

result of Descartes' lack of engagement with the ethical, Hume is able to separate the ontological from the ethical in his is-ought dichotomy precisely because philosophy had become a discipline focused not on the world as the place in which humans live, but as an object of scientific study.

The world and all that is in it is reduced to a system of originally separated objects that have no intrinsic relation to one another; things and persons are merely the objects of rational calculation. As being only material objects that are facts, all things are deprived of any ethical significance or value. A thing only is; it provides no indication about what ought to be the case. Values or oughts are imposed upon facts but are external to these facts. Ethics thus has no ontological foundation, and is divorced from the other disciplines of philosophy. Philosophy as a whole is reconceived as being composed of distinct disciplines that do not overlap with or relate to one another. Though the Stoic Zeno of Citium divided philosophy into ethics, physics, and logic, this was within the ancient and medieval framework of philosophy as a way of life that integrated the discoveries of these disciplines into a single therapeutic whole.[9] Prior to Descartes, the disciplines were fundamentally united and intertwined, always in conversation with and emerging from one another. For the Stoics held that one should act only with respect to that over which one has power and accept that over which one lacks power precisely because the world was composed of atoms and void, limiting the freedom and ability of human agents. Aristotle and Plato both maintained that wisdom, which includes knowledge of things and their first principles, was constitutive of the best life; but this wisdom assumes a knowledge of the world, a knowledge of physics. Ethics, physics, and

---

[9] Diogenes Laertius, 7.39-40, in Inwood and Gerson.

logic, the whole of philosophy, were always mixed together. Before Descartes, a philosopher was compelled to address the ethical simply as a matter of being a philosopher, and the ethical stood as the core of philosophy.

Notably, Immanuel Kant cites "Ancient Greek philosophy" as "divided into three sciences: physics, ethics, and logic."[10] Yet since he is writing after Descartes, this distinction is interpreted in a fundamentally different way than it had been by the Greeks. Whereas the Greeks, and the Medievals with them, conceived of the disciplines all as paths that one had to take to provide therapy by thinking through the fullness of existence, Kant and subsequent philosophy has thought of these disciplines as fundamentally distinct from one another, as investigating unconnected domains. These domains are each governed by their own set of natural laws, moral laws, or formal laws that do not overlap. Each field is compartmentalized and developed without regard to the others. Most significantly, since the certain foundations of science and knowledge of nature had become the principle task of philosophy, how physics is possible at all, how the knowledge of physics is possible, had become the primary focus of philosophy. Answering how science is possible however requires knowing how humans know— epistemology, or in Kant's terms, critique. In Kant's own words, the question of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is "[h]ow are synthetic judgments a priori possible," that is, how scientific knowledge is possible since it "rests on such synthetic, i.e., ampliative principles" that "add to the concept of the subject a predicate that was not thought in it [the subject] at all, and could not have been extracted from it through any analysis."[11] More simply, synthetic knowledge adds something new that was not contained in

---

[10] *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4. 387.
[11] *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 19, A 10/B 13, A 7/B 11.

something; it extends human knowledge, it discovers. The task of science is, after all, to extend knowledge to new realms, which requires that one know how one is able to actually have knowledge of these new realms that are beyond what one already knows.

Phenomenology only emerges after the priority of epistemology and the strict division among the disciplines had been established by Kant, and it thus emerged in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* as a chiefly epistemological inquiry.[12] Epistemology as already concerned with how one knows that which is, implies also an ontological dimension to phenomenology, a possibility that was brought to fruition by Heidegger. Perhaps, then, why so many of the most significant figures of phenomenology never provide an ethics is because they are working within a tradition that in its origins privileges the epistemological and ontological task without ethical reflection. This view of phenomenology is clearly expressed by Sartre, who maintains that "ontology itself can not formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is, and we can not possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives."[13] Phenomenology is an ontological inquiry into what is and the ground of what is. This problematizes the

---

[12] There has been a tendency in research over the course of the last two or so decades to begin to more seriously confront the possibility that Husserl either provides, even if not fully formed, an ethics or at the very least provides the resources necessary to develop an ethics.. For instance, Sophie Loidolt has written a number of articles on the question of ethics in Husserl, including "Husserl and the Fact of Practical Reason: Phenomenological Claims toward a Philosophical Ethics" (2009) and "The 'Daimon' that Speaks through Love: A Phenomenological Ethics of the Absolute Ought" (2012), and she is hardly alone in this research. I am not here going to deny the possibility that an ethics might be able to be developed out of Husserl, or that in some way Husserl himself does provide an ethics. However, the fact remains that Husserl never published an ethics, and as such, his contribution to the development of the tradition of phenomenological ethics has been minimal. As Loidolt herself observes, "Husserl never published any major work on ethics, a fact which should be kept in mind when studying and judging his ethical outline" (Loidolt 2012, 1n2). Husserl arrives too late to the establishment of phenomenological ethics by Scheler and its later development by Levinas, so that whatever contributions and insights he might have made are fundamentally contributions and insights that are only now being added to phenomenological ethics, rather than to the historical development thereof. This prevents Husserl from being counted among the great phenomenological ethicists, even if he might provide ethical resources.
[13] *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 85.

relation between phenomenology and ethics. Unless what is, is already permeated with the ethical, a possibility that Sartre explicitly rejects and much of traditional phenomenology seems to at least implicitly reject, then the is, the ontological, will be barren of normative sources. Phenomenology is fundamentally ontological, concerned only with what is, only with being, and not the good. Sartre has drawn a harsh line between the ontological and the ethical, being and the good.

If Sartre is correct that ontology and ethics are entirely separate in phenomenology, then any attempt to develop a phenomenological ethics would not be grounded in an ontology. Phenomenological ethics is not conducted according to an ontological standard, and is not founded in ontological inquiry. The source of the good, of value, or of the right, whatever term might be preferred, is not located in the realm of ontology. There will be no ontological ground for the ethical. A phenomenological ethics would not be founded in ontology. In its historical practice, phenomenological ethics has confirmed its opposition to ontological tendencies. Both Scheler and Levinas in their respective attempts to develop a phenomenological ethics have established their ethics on a basis thoroughly independent from ontology. For Scheler, the foundation for ethics is the "values (including the values 'good' and 'evil') [that] are non-formal qualities of contents possessing a determinate order of ranks with respect to 'higher' and 'lower.' This order is independent of the form of being into which values enter."[14] Values are the source of normativity, and operate according to their own measure that is distinct from the measure of being. Values are separate from being; how they constitute what is good is not contingent on whatever conditions obtain in the concrete world of

---

[14] *Formalism*, 17.

persons and things. Thus, ethics and ontology remain separated for Scheler. Levinas too

distinguishes the foundation of ethics from being; in *Totality and Infinity*, he writes that

"[w]e name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other

ethics," which he contrasts with "ontology," the "comprehension of beings," that

"reduces the other to the same [and] promotes freedom."[15] Ethics arises from the

encounter with the human Other, indicating that the source of normativity is the Other.

This Other is of a domain separate from that of being, since the latter refers to the world

of the self that attempts to reduce the Other to itself and the totality of its knowledge.

Only when the self is questioned, only when it is limited by the Other does the ethical

arise, in opposition to the promotion of the self in being. Levinas radicalizes this notion

even further in *Otherwise than Being*, where he argues that "transcendence," or being-

for-the-other, "is passing over to being's other, otherwise than being. Not *to be*

otherwise, but *otherwise than being*."[16] The ethical is not simply another mode or way of

being. Instead, the ethical belongs to a realm completely other than that of being. Not

only can the ontological not serve as the basis for ethics, it is opposed to ethics. Levinas

maintains a strict divide between being and goodness.

Sartre's claim that "ontology cannot formulate ethical precepts" would thus

appear to be vindicated by the tradition of phenomenological ethics that thus far has

always attempted to develop an ethics on a ground wholly divorced from ontology. This

distinction between ontology and ethics is reminiscent of both David Hume's is-ought

dichotomy and Kant's distinction between nature and freedom. Kant constructs his

whole ethics on the basis of Hume's distinction between is and ought; to the domain of

---

[15] *Totality and Infinity*, 43,42.
[16] *Otherwise than Being*, 3.

nature belong the "laws in accordance with which everything happens," and to the

domain of freedom belong the "laws in accordance with which everything ought to

happen."[17] In Kant, the is-ought dichotomy becomes more than a skeptical instrument.

Kant's ethics begins with the dogmatic acceptance of the skeptical claim that what ought

to be the case has no basis in what is the case.[18] The source of the moral law for Kant is

thus ultimately located in the necessary and universal self-legislating rule of reason, in

the autonomy of the will, apart from any contingent and particular features of the world

of nature. Ethics is based in freedom rather than nature. For both Kantian and

phenomenological ethics, ontology and ethics are divorced from one another.

This is not merely an accidental conceptual similarity, however, between Kantian

and phenomenological ethics; the tradition of phenomenological ethics itself arises as a

response to and thereby continuation of Kant. Scheler writes *Formalism* as a direct reply

to Kant's ethics, so that the tradition of phenomenological ethics begins with a

confrontation with Kant. According to Scheler, the "Kantian colossus of steel and bronze

obstructs the way of philosophy toward a concrete and evidential *theory of moral*

values."[19] Yet in articulating his ethics as a response to Kant, Scheler remains

determined by Kant; as I will argue in this study, Scheler's distinction between bearers of

value and values themselves follows the is-ought dichotomy. Similarly, Levinas states

---

[17] *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:387-388.

[18] As Walter Kaufmann notes in *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, when reading the *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Critique of Judgment*, "one often feels that Kant abandoned a rigorously questioning attitude and an analysis of actual experience for the sake of symmetry and repetition of the neat schemes of his *Critique of Pure Reason*" (107). Despite his critical pretensions, especially in the Second *Critique*, an actual critical stance that examines unfounded presuppositions often seems to be lacking; Kant assumes, without question, among others, that the only thing that is unconditionally good is a good will, that the self is in fact autonomous, and perhaps most significantly that nature or being cannot be ethically informative of the good.

[19] *Formalism*, 6.

13

that there is an aspect of the encounter with the face that is "suggested by the practical philosophy of Kant, to which we feel particularly close."[20] There is a fundamental similarity between Kant's ethics that is not founded on anything ontological and Levinas' ethics that in being oriented toward the Other refuses the ontological relation. Just as Kant cannot find the basis for ethics in the world of nature and being, Levinas also articulates his ethics on the basis of the Other who is otherwise than being.

This divide between nature and freedom, is and ought, being and goodness, unites the disparate approaches to phenomenological ethics founded by Scheler and Levinas. Both value ethics and alterity ethics remain close in their foundations to Kant. This closeness to Kant in adhering to a divide between being and goodness is what I am calling Scheler's and Levinas' Deep Kantianism. This Kantianism is deep because it is usually implicit; the Kantianism that I am here ascribing to Scheler and Levinas is neither intentional nor deliberate. But though implicit, this Deep Kantianism disrupts the ethics of both Scheler and Levinas through preserving the chasm between being and goodness that isolates goodness from life and deprives life of intrinsic ethical significance. The ought, the imperative, the moral norms that Scheler and Levinas develop remain separate from and not rooted in the is, in what is the case, in the domain of being. Goodness and being are wholly distinct spheres in Kant, a distinction that remains in both Scheler and Levinas. Yet, this leaves phenomenological ethics standing on a ground that is itself not phenomenological. For the distinction between is and ought, between fact and value, between being and goodness, is not a phenomenological one.

---

[20] *Is Ontology Fundamental?*, 10.

When Hume establishes the is-ought dichotomy that proved to be so influential

for Kant, the distinction between is and ought is situated in entirely rational and

conceptual terms. Hume challenges in those ethical arguments that proceed "for some

time in the ordinary way of reasoning," "how this new relation" of the "*ought*, or an

ought not" "can be a deduction from others," of the character of the "*is*, and *is not*" that

"are entirely different from it."[21] According to Hume, ought cannot be deduced from is;

they are two different predicates. *Deduction* defines the relation between is and ought:

how an ought might be logically demonstrated from an is. Is and ought are conceived of

in logical, abstract terms. Yet this assumes precisely that the connection between is and

ought is a logical relation, and can be understood solely in terms of the construction of

valid syllogisms. It assumes that the relation between is and ought is exhausted by a

logical interpretation, ignoring the possibility that is and ought might be from the

beginning inherently bound together in the richness of lived experience, that in the

domain of existence an is, always brings with itself an ought. Hume attempts to address

this possibility when he denies that ethics is a "*matter of fact*."[22] Hume asks his reader in

the case of "willful murder," to "[e]xamine it in all lights, and see if you can find that

matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*."[23] But at most, what one will find is

"a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter

of fact; but it is the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object."[24]

There is nothing inherently vicious in the act of murder; there are "only certain passions,

---

[21] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 521.
[22] *Ibid*., 520
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] *Ibid*.

motives, volitions, and thoughts."[25] None of these, however, are vice itself. The closest

that vice comes to real existence is in the feeling of "disapprobation" that one has for the

so-called evil act. According to Hume, this is merely a feeling in oneself, and says

nothing at all about the good or evil of the act in the world. The act in the world is not at

all ethically informative, as it does not inherently contain any good or evil in itself.

Existence, what is, says nothing about what ought to be.

  But as Hume himself confesses, the feeling of disapprobation or indignation that

arises in oneself is "towards this act." The feeling or passion in oneself is oriented

directly at the act in the world called good or evil. This feeling only occurs precisely in

response to the act in the world, suggesting that there is an intrinsic relation between the

act and the feeling. The feeling indicates something about the moral character of the act

itself. The given moral qualities of the act are the basis for the felt response in oneself.

There is something vicious about the act. Whatever one's own interior disposition might

be, it still responds to the exterior act and its character. This implies, against Hume's

assumption that vice is another quality added on to an act, that vice itself is constituted by

the act; the act itself is vicious. Vice need not be added on to the deed from elsewhere;

this assumption on Hume's part is precisely what is in question, the source of the good or

bad character of the act, which can be in the act from the beginning. Vice might originate

in nothing other than the specific passions and thoughts that are the source of the murder.

However, Hume makes an unsupported assumption that vice, good and evil, the ought,

are imposed from outside, that the world is neatly divided into logical atoms. But the

feelings with which one responds to the act in the world are intrinsically related to this

---

[25] *Ibid*.

16

act. There is an inner jointure between is and ought, feeling and acts, to which Hume, in his rational presuppositions, is entirely blind.

The source of his blindness is his claim that "passions, volitions, and actions" are "original facts and realities, complete in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions."[26] Hume claims that passions and actions exist in themselves, without any relation to what is other. There is no room for passions or acts to have an originary connection to any sort of intrinsic object. But this is problematic; one only has passions insofar as these passions are related to their source outside of the self, to their respective objects that caused them. A thought or passion is empty without its content that points to some worldly situation or state of affairs. There is no passion, no thought, without its respective object. For Hume, "[a]ll beings in the universe, considered in themselves, appear entirely loose and independent of each other."[27] This is precisely the point of departure for Hume's separation of is and ought. He assumes that beings are from the beginning independent of each other without relation. But this presupposes that beings are in themselves at all, that they are atomic and their own separate realities that have no windows, that they are initially distinct and only later come together. This is, however, a conceptual, logical claim that abstracts from things as encountered in experience. Only if one first removes themselves from experience and its contents can one claim that things are originally independent. In experience, things are inherently united and intertwined. They are given not as atomic but as joined. Hume assumes the primacy of the very reason that he seeks to call into question. He begins with logical, conceptual, and rational distinctions that are not at all given with regard to

---

[26] *Ibid.*, 510.
[27] *Ibid.*, 518.

existing things. Any claim of considering things in themselves divorces itself from the

jointure of experience, and so fails to address the originary jointure given in lived

experience. One encounters the water as life-giving, and feels pleasure and relief when

she drinks it and it soothes her parched throat; one encounters the sufferings of another as

bad for the other, for whom she provides a shoulder to cry on; and the flower blooms

richly because of the rain it receives and the fertile soil out of which it grows. Hume

posits the rational conception of the world as a logical system, leading him to fail to

consider the jointure of things, and thus to remain blind to the jointure of is and ought.

Any attempt to further develop a phenomenological ethics must therefore question this

heretofore grounding assumption of a divide between nature and freedom, being and

goodness, fact and value, is and ought, that has dominated ethical investigation since

Hume and Kant's adoption of Hume. Phenomenological ethics must search for a new

ground; it must return to the things themselves, the affairs of daily life, in which one will

find that from the beginning goodness and being are radically intertwined and joined

rather than divorced.

The clue for the specific task of grounding a phenomenological ethics in lived

existential experience is located in a surprising source—the fundamental ontology of

Heidegger. For Heidegger is the one who has most clearly discovered the ontological

character of affectivity. Affectivity is directed toward the disclosure of ontological and

existential situations and affairs; the core of affectivity, *Befindlichkeit* or disposition for

Heidegger, is its ontologically disclosive tendency that is revealed in daily life by

Stimmung or mood. In *Being and Time*, he writes that a mood "assails us," and "arises

out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being."[28] Mood is not merely something internal, a self-sufficient mental state, independent of all connections. Rather, passions come upon the self insofar as it is joined to the world in Being-in. Passions are a response to dealing with things and others. Mood "*has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something.*"[29] In being a response to an encounter with the things of the world, mood or passion discloses these things. The character of the world, and how one stands with respect to the world, is revealed by passion. By indicating the disposition of the self with its world, mood reveals the self as Dasein in its Being. Mood is ontologically indicative, pointing to the way in which one exists at all. In being indicative, mood reveals what aids and threatens, what is good and bad, for the self in its Being.

Heidegger made this discovery through his retrieval of a pre-Kantian originary *pathos* that began with Augustine and culminated in Aristotle, a pathos that leads to the rebirth of an equally originary *ethos*. As already pointed out in this introduction, the ancients and medievals understood being and goodness to be united. Consequently, by turning to a source prior to Kant and Descartes, Heidegger was able to begin a return to the ontologically indicative role played by affectivity. However, he does not develop the ethical ramifications of affectivity, despite adopting terms from thinkers who did see affectivity as ontologically and ethically revelatory. By referring to Augustine, though, Heidegger has pointed the way to another clue that allows for the overcoming of Deep Kantianism. Augustine, more clearly than anyone else, has shown the primordial unity of goodness and being to be revealed through affectivity. The epigraphs of this dissertation

---

[28] *Being and Time*, 136.
[29] *Ibid*., 137.

19

are thus a reference to Augustine's most decisive clue that gestures toward the necessary phenomenological work to show how passion discloses the jointure of being and goodness. Conducting this requisite work on the basis of a rigorous phenomenological approach is the final clue that allows for the passionate unity of goodness and being to become manifest, founding the source of normativity lived experience of feeling the Other. In a way, this whole study can be read as an extended commentary on Augustine.

Though phenomenological ethics has failed to question the assumption of Deep Kantianism at its ground, this hardly means that it has thus far altogether failed. Rather, both Scheler and Levinas in their monumental works have provided the initial clues that begin to indicate the path toward a new grounding of a phenomenological ethics; yet each clue bears about itself the shadow of Deep Kantianism. This Deep Kantianism (Chapter 1) began with Kant's systematization of Hume's is-ought dichotomy in the *Groundwork*, which had far reaching implications. Goodness and being, as divorced, prevent affectivity, which is on the side of nature, from being ethically informative, and the world is stripped of any inherent ethical worth or dignity, while such ethical worth is deprived of all meaning by being entirely removed from the concrete world. By initiating the tradition of phenomenological ethics, Scheler reveals the first two clues to overcome this divide. The first clue (Chapter 2) is that affectivity is constitutive for ethical experience, that only a being with a heart can be an ethical being. Affectivity is ethically revelatory. However, this affectivity is not oriented toward the concrete affairs and beings of life, but is directed toward the realm of values that is distinct from the things, the bearers of values, of the world, and thus remains haunted by Deep Kantianism. The second clue (Chapter 3) is the primordiality of love as the fundamental and constitutive passion for

the person, who by such love becomes the center of meaning and existence. Love is directed toward persons, but turns out to be haunted by Deep Kantianism since love only loves persons insofar as they are bearers of the highest values. Love passes through the person to the realm of isolated value, denying the intrinsic worth of the person who has value only derivatively. Once again, the shadow of Deep Kantianism returns.

The next clues are provided by Levinas' alterity ethics. His first clue (Chapter 4) is the revelation of the person as the Other, as irreducibly other than myself, and the priority of the ethical relation. Humans are ethical beings insofar as the self is subject to the Other; good and evil apply to persons not as the result of value, but as the result of alterity. How precisely the self is subject to the Other remains problematic, however, insofar as the affective character of the person remains unethical and divorced from being-for-the-Other. How the self is open to the Other is not clarified. This suspicion toward affectivity is the first way that Levinas remains haunted by Deep Kantianism. The second clue from Levinas (Chapter 5) is the fundamentally, though textually implicit, ontological nothingness and ungroundedness of the person. Despite Levinas' closeness to Kant by explicitly attempting to divorce the ethical from the ontological, insofar as both the Other in *Totality and Infinity* and the self in *Otherwise than Being* are permeated by an abyssal nothingness, the ethical is founded in an ontological experience of the nothing that though it begins to emerge from Kant's shadow it perhaps remains in Heidegger's shadow, a dual haunting by Deep Kantianism and fundamental ontology.

This opening to the ontological leads to the final clue from the phenomenological tradition, given by Heidegger (Chapter 6). This clue is that of an affective ontology, located in Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit* and its development in his readings of

Augustine and Aristotle that goes behind the Kantian dichotomy between is and ought. *Befindlichkeit* or pathos, the terms Heidegger uses in his retrieval of Aristotelian affectivity, signify the disposition of the self toward the entities of the world, in which both the self and the things of the world are disclosed. Affectivity reveals how the self's encounter with things is uplifting or upsetting for the self's Being, good or bad for the self's Being. Ontological affairs are either good or bad for the self, suggesting an intertwining of the ethical and ontological. Yet Heidegger fails to develop his ontology in its ethically character and neglects the place of the Other, leaving the good unthought and thus not providing the necessary phenomenological ethics.

These five clues, and in turn what troubles each of them, clears the path for a new grounding of phenomenological ethics (Chapter 7). Only through an engagement with Scheler's directing affectivity toward the ethical, Levinas' prioritizing of the Other as the ethical, and Heidegger's recognition of affectivity as ontological can the originary unity of being and goodness be established, providing the foundation for a future phenomenological ethics of passionate alterity. In this final chapter, I argue that the nothingness of the self revealed by the passion of restlessness opens the self up, since it needs a ground outside of itself to exist. The self seeks ground, it seeks or loves Being in response to its own nihility. The self is directed outside of itself by love. It seeks Being, which uplifts it and is conducive toward its continued existence. This Being is good; but as the self is nothing in itself, it must go outside of itself toward its ground that is other than itself. The self loves the Other, who as the infinitely Other offers ground to the self. As always already Other, the Other is the good and Being of the self who is by love wholly exteriorized outside of itself. Being and the good are united in the Other as the

22

origin and end of the exteriorizing movement of love. Through this overcoming of Deep

Kantianism, a new phenomenological ethics can be established that does not begin with

the assumption that lived experience is empty of all moral norms and implications, rather

beginning with a new point of departure that recognizes the unified character of being

and goodness. A further benefit of this new point of departure is that it will perhaps

allow phenomenological ethics to gain wide currency, a phenomenological ethics that

incorporates the best insights of value and alterity ethics and fundamental ontology,

enabling phenomenological ethics to extend beyond the domain of continental

philosophy.[30]

Clarifications and Limitations

Before continuing with the argument, the path must be cleared to show that this

argument is not a repetition of other claims in phenomenological ethics, which has

recently seen significant developments. In the Schelerian tradition of value ethics,

Anthony Steinbock has argued in his *Moral Emotions* that emotions "have a distinctive

structure," "their own kinds of evidence," and "are revelatory of the person."[31]

Moreover, the way in which emotions are revelatory of evidence and of the person

---

[30] Ultimately, this task of decisively establishing a phenomenological ethics that possesses general currency is meant to provide an alternative to the three traditional analytic ethical theories of virtue ethics, deontology, and utilitarianism. This phenomenological ethics in particular could best be called, in contrast to the primary analytic ethics, an alterity ethics, or an ethics of the other. The closest analogue in analytic ethics to alterity ethics would be care ethics, which, however, often finds itself subsumed under virtue ethics. The primary difficulty for care ethics seems to me to be its lack of an ontological foundation in the structure of existence itself; care ethics fails to adequately provide an anthropology and ontology of person as related to others that would serve as the basis for its ethical claims. Ethics and ontology remain separate. The phenomenological alterity ethics that I seek to develop here thus seeks not only to provide just another competing set of ethical claims, but also to find a basis for these in the structure and jointure of reality itself that would allow for the adjudication of various ethical dilemmas. The ethical and the ontological are revealed together, which should become the point of departure for any future ethics, even beyond phenomenology.

[31] Steinbock 2014, 5.

belong to the emotions themselves; they have their own unique, particular way of disclosing the world that is not shared with other ways of disclosure.[32] Emotions in particular become moral when they "are essentially interpersonal" or "arise essentially in an interpersonal nexus."[33] Rightfully, Steinbock has argued for affectivity as fundamentally indicative for how the self is to live and most importantly how the self is to comport itself to other persons, as revealed through emotions such as love, guilt, and humility, among others. In its excellent analysis of individual emotions in their ethical implications, *Moral Emotions* goes far beyond most other accounts in its attention to phenomenological detail and evidence.

However, *Moral Emotions* remains at least somewhat unsatisfactory on two counts. The first is ontological; though Steinbock rightly notes that the emotions of guilt and humility show forth "the non-self-grounding character of who I am," he fails to make this 'not' itself, this nothingness, the foundation for ethics. [34] Despite the acknowledgement that Steinbock gives to the nothing in his ethics, he does not sufficiently elaborate on the character or implications of this constitutive nothingness for the ethical. The nothing is far from being the core of his account. The second, more recognizably ethical difficulty for Steinbock's ethics is that the role of value and its relation to love remain unclarified. In this he explicitly follows Scheler, writing "[i]n Max Scheler's terms, loving only occurs when there issues beyond what is already given a *movement* toward 'higher' values," and "loving [is] a movement toward another as bearer of value."[35] Love seems to be directed at values, rather than at concrete things;

---

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Ibid*., 12.

[34] *Ibid*., 241; cf. *Ibid*., 121.

[35] *Ibid*., 225.

though love might be aimed at a concrete thing or person, such love is aimed precisely on account of such entity being a bearer of value. Love exists for the bearer only insofar as such bearer participates in what is not its own, value. This also suggests that perhaps, all of the other moral emotions that Steinbock describes, following Scheler, would be a response not merely to a thing but more fundamentally and in the fullest sense a response to a value. Emotions consequently seem to be aimed at value, rather than concrete entities. Thus, emotions, and even love, seem to be removed from the world; Steinbock would remain subject to the same difficulty that I will later suggest in this study that challenges Scheler—the Deep Kantianism of separating values from their bearers, of separating goodness and being. In remaining too close to Scheler, Steinbock is thus troubled by the same characteristics that disrupt value ethics.

Francois Raffoul, in the tradition of Levinasian alterity ethics and influenced by Heideggerian ontology, has provided in *The Origins of Responsibility* an ethics where what is central is "[h]aving to respond to a call, exposure to the vulnerability of the other…, openness to the event of being as my own 'to be.'"[36] The person is constituted not as a powerful, arbitrarily free subject but as a receptivity and thus a responsibility to what is not one's own. In being oriented toward what does not belong to the self, the core of Raffoul's ethics is "the experience of and exposure to an inappropriable."[37] The re-thinking of responsibility that occurs in Raffoul's text thoroughly reverses the activity of the Kantian and even the Aristotelian subject in exchange for the passivity of the Levinasian and Heideggerian subject, allowing for an ethics of responding to the inappropriable.

---

[36] Raffoul 2010, 19.
[37] *Ibid.*

25

But the character of this inappropriable is not provided; though Raffoul certainly is influenced by Levinas, he does not seem to necessarily hold that his own inappropriable is the same as Levinas' Other, an Other who is a human Other. Raffoul's inappropriable seems to borrow too much from Heidegger's event of Being, which is not at all personal. This is problematic since it seems to be the case that ethics fundamentally has to do with how one relates to the other concrete human person. If this is broadened to the inappropriable, then unless the inappropriable is reduced to the human Other, the actual obligations and responsibilities to which the I is subject seem to be empty. What the self ought to do vanishes before the expanse of the impersonal. Being the opening to the inappropriable—if the inappropriable is not somehow concretely given to the responsive self—does not provide a basis or standard for the ethical life. How one is to comport oneself to the inappropriable remains undetermined. Further, Raffoul does not quite establish how the person experiences responsibility in herself, how responsibility is in her and constitutes her concretely. This is a question of moral motivation; how is the person moved to be responsible? Is she moved by love, or some sort of affectivity? In following Levinas in emphasizing responsibility without clarifying the motivation and affective character of this responsibility, Raffoul is troubled by the same difficulties that I will argue trouble Levinas—affectivity remains ignored, if not outright dismissed, in the ethical relation.[38]

---

[38] Still within the sphere of recent attempts to develop a phenomenological ethics, and like Raffoul influenced by both Levinas and Heidegger, Jean-Luc Nancy in *Being Singular Plural* argues that "*[t]he plurality of beings is at the foundation of Being*" (12). In this plurality, "Being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulation in the *with* and as the *with* of the singular plural coexistence" (3). Nancy is invoking an ontological argument that Being itself is constituted and revealed as a plurality, as a society of beings existing alongside one another, such that these beings only are in this relationality. Each being is itself, is singular, in being pluralized by its existence with others. Nancy's efforts here certainly deserve credit, but *Being Singular Plural* lacks the phenomenological rigor of Levinas' Totality and Infinity or Otherwise than Being, or that of Scheler's Formalism. The evidence for Nancy's claims in lived

There should also at this point be clarification regarding the terms employed in the argument. First, I am using the terms passion, affectivity, feeling, mood, emotion, sensibility, enjoyment, happiness, inclination, *Befindlichkeit*, *Gefühl*, *jouissance*, and *sensibilité*, roughly synonymously, not to elide the nuances of each philosopher who uses the distinct terms, but to allow for a dialogue between these philosophers regarding a certain realm of phenomena. All of these terms refer, to a greater or lesser extent, to the same domain of phenomena, the domain of the heartfelt existence of the person.[39] Among these phenomena are love, joy, anxiety, restlessness, pleasure, pain, desire, fear, sorrow, anger, hate, pride, and more. These are all felt in the person, who experiences

---

experience itself is not always present. Further, I am not sure if plurality is the best term; for if the self only is through what is other than itself as the result of it being nothing in itself, it exists not simply in a plurality but in being for alterity. Plurality does would seem to deny the priority of certain others over other others; though Levinas himself might be guilty of this, the language of the Other to me seems to be more suited to describing my responsibility to the Other, rather than plurality. As from the Other, I must be for the Other, an implication that plurality seems to miss or at least not emphasize.

      Beyond the domain of phenomenological ethics, Justin Harmon has attempted to establish an ontological ethics in the form of what he calls an "object-oriented ethics" (4), or "OOE" (5), in which "every different object, insofar as it is, speaks the irreducible language of ought" (134). These objects that contain an ought are fundamentally material objects; what is, is matter (157). Harmon's ethics and ontology are a materialism. However, Harmon never clarifies how the demands of things come upon the self, how the self discovers the source of normativity. An even greater problem that confronts Harmon is his materialism in which Being is reduced to matter. But how does matter, constantly changing and ontologically insufficient, dependent on a prior sequence of cause and effect, come to be at all? Matter cannot make itself, requiring a ground, Being, beyond it. The feelings, passions, choices, thoughts, and most of all consciousness of the person would also seem to testify against any sort of materialism, in that no amount of external observation can by itself say anything about the internal life of spirit. Moreover, that a material thing, one that is not even alive, imposes an ethical demand upon the self seems tenuous at best. As closed off in itself, a thing never encounters anything else as other; it does not feel, does not receive alterity, locked in itself. But to be ethical assumes a sort of responsibility in which an ethical being is open to others and to how it might relate to these others, meaning that a closed off thing can never bear any responsibility, which would prevent it from becoming ethical at all. The basis for Harmon's claim is simply lacking.

[39] I use the term heartfelt to further emphasize the emotional and felt dimension of life that is already indicated by English heart, which translates Latin *cor* and French *coeur* (itself derived from the Latin). The leading philosophers who have investigated affectivity and feeling, beginning with Augustine and continuing through Pascal to Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand, have characterized this domain as heart. In *Confessions* and throughout his writings, Augustine constantly employs *cor*, Pascal is concerned with an order of *coeur*, Scheler quotes Pascal regarding the order of *coeur*, and Von Hildebrand wrote in English a whole treatise, *The Heart*, that deals with the emotional life. Among those who have rigorously and seriously investigated this domain of the heart, the term heart has been preeminent to describe a certain definite range of concrete phenomena, a tradition that I seek to continue here.

these feelings as coming upon her in the various daily situations of life. Though certain terms might highlight specific phenomena within the sphere of affectivity, what matters here is that they are all still referring to the overall phenomenon of the heart. When I use these terms, then, I am speaking of this domain of human existence that is neither sensation nor reason, the felt character of existence that comes upon a person and moves her. However, at particular points in the dissertation, I will favor certain terms over others, as is appropriate for the respective author under consideration, since Kant, Scheler, Levinas, and Heidegger all use different terms to refer to the domain of the heart that have been translated varyingly into English. In the chapters on Scheler, I will emphasize affectivity or feeling as standard translations of Scheler's *Gefühl*, which will periodically appear alongside the English terms; in the chapters on Levinas, I will speak of enjoyment, sensibility, and happiness as the standard translations of *jouissance*, *sensibilité*, and *bonheur*, respectively; in the chapter on Heidegger, I will use disposition or passivity as translations of *Befindlichkeit* and mood for *Stimmung*; and in the final chapter that sets forth the grounds for a new phenomenological ethics, I will primarily prefer the word passion.

I prefer passion because, though there certainly is much to say regarding the nuances, benefits, and unique connotations of employing particular terms such as feeling, passion, affectivity, mood, or enjoyment, passion itself emphasizes, arguably better than any other English word, the passive, received, moving, and felt character of the heart. Passion was through French adopted into English descended from Latin *patior*, *pati*, *passus*, meaning to suffer or undergo, which was used by Latin authors as the literal Latin

translation of Greek παθη.[40] Παθη is related to the verb πασχω, which most fully means to receive an impression from without, to suffer in opposition to doing. The senses of παθη and πασχω are entirely passive and receptive; there is no action, or even reaction, a juxtaposition of act and reaction, a duality of the two equals of act and potency. Nothing is done or able to be done in παθη, which is prior to any act. One must passively undergo and suffer, suffer the reception of her very existence, before she can act. Action, and a passion that comes from action, is subsequent to originary παθη. Passion, then, indicates the primordially received movement and pure passivity of heartfelt experience, where a person receives and is open to the richness of Being. Even the word affect retains in its origins an active connotation; it descends from Latin *adficio*, to influence or work upon, which itself has a root in *facio*, *facere*, meaning to make, to perform, or to do. *Facio* is active, an "I do," "I am able." Affect thus retains this activity that grants an undue primacy to the self, which can act before it has suffered. Consequently, affect does not describe the realm of the heart as adequately as does passion.[41] The domain of what has generally been called affectivity should perhaps thus rather be called the domain of passion.

This is perhaps controversial, given Dietrich von Hildebrand's interpretation of the relative standings of affectivity and passion; for him, affections are "motivated by values," in contrast to passions, which "exhibit an intrinsic enmity to reason and to moral freedom."[42] Affectivity is fundamentally an intentional response to values that as such

---

[40] A particularly informative example of this is found in Augustine, who himself recognizes that the Latin *pati*, English passion, is the best translation of Greek παθη (*The City of God*, 9.4).
[41] Admittedly, in contemporary English usage, affectivity and affect seem to have largely lost an active connotation. However, their roots, even if forgotten, retain an activity that is not proper to the character of the phenomena under consideration.
[42] *The Heart*, 37, 34.

reveals something to cognition, permitting a space for thinking, deliberation, and will. But passion is an overcoming of reason and freedom, since it is not an intentional response to values themselves. It is a welling up, a dynamism that tears through the person, subjecting her to feelings that control her, lowering her to the level of following base desires. But this is phenomenologically false; there is no justification for the assumption that a feeling that entirely overcomes reason and freedom is intrinsically bad. Perhaps, even, the complete overcoming by a feeling or passion is goodness itself, where passion lifts the self up out of itself, sublimating reason and freedom to the heart, as occurs, for example, in the case of joy or love. What limits could there be to joy or love?

The reply that Von Hildebrand would perhaps give is that joy or love are affections and so intentionally oriented as value-responses toward their objects. However, this only pushes the question back further instead of justifying the claim that the overcoming of reason is bad. Von Hildebrand's claim assumes the primacy of reason that belongs to previous intellectualist ethics. Most significantly, there seems to be no passion that is not as equally intentional as any affect; all passions, including the examples given by Von Hildebrand of "ambition, covetousness, lechery, avarice, hatred, envy, which have a dark, violent, antirational character" seem to be intentional.[43] Though these feelings might be morally problematic if not outright evil, this does not preclude their intentional character. If anything, the evil of these passions more radically confirms their intentional character. Hatred is so repulsive precisely because it is aimed at the harm and denigration of the Other, while one finds ambition disagreeable because it elevates the self and its exaltation above all and everyone else. These are intentional

---

[43] *Ibid*., 34.

relationships. A phenomenology of the lower feelings or passions as Von Hildebrand calls them shows that they too are intentional. There is no categorical difference, then, between passion and affect.

There should also be note that von Hildebrand's hostility toward passion may itself come from a Kantian—and thus not phenomenological—distinction between affectivity and passion. Kant writes that "[a]ffects are specifically different from passions," since "in the case of an affect the freedom of the mind is certainly hampered, [while] in the case of passion it is removed."[44] This is parallel to Von Hildebrand's basis for the subordination of passion; passion is opposed to reason and is not indicative of values. It lacks the intentional aim of affectivity. But as already shown, there is no phenomenological basis either for Von Hildebrand's claim or for its potential origin in Kant's theory of the emotions. That the removal of the freedom of the mind is bad assumes that reason and freedom are the basis of or intrinsic to the ethical life; but if the will is only moved by passion and feeling, and if reason is unable to out of itself establish moral principles, then there is no justification for denigrating passion on the basis of its opposition to reason. This term *passion* is thus the single central, unifying term of this study, for passion refers to the domain of the phenomena of passive, receptive, involuntary, and moving characteristic of heartfelt existence, across Kant, Scheler, Levinas, and Heidegger, a heart that I will attempt to show is equally revelatory of the good and being.

By the good, I mean the source and basis of all normativity and ethics; I use normativity, ethics, and morality interchangeably, to refer those phenomena that are the

---

[44] *Critique of Judgment*, 5: 272.

standard and guide of how a person is to live her life, how and why she is to live the way that she does in daily existence, what informs her decisions for who she is to be. She is to live in a certain way, to dwell, to be—which introduces what I mean by Being. I do not wish to turn this study into an investigation of the question of the meaning of Being; thus, in general, what I mean by Being will be clarified in the course of the project. But, for the moment, Being refers to the concrete realm of phenomena that exist, the things and persons with which one dwells, along with the source by which these things, persons, and myself exist at all. Being is thus a reference most fundamentally to that which grounds that which is. Even in Kant, for whom nature is the totality of appearances governed by cause and effect, these appearances exist precisely as subject to causality, they are said to be, so that nature involves the question of Being in the sense of the ground of the things of appearances. It is a question of ground, of what gives me my own Being and existence. As seeking this ground, the person finds herself permeated by the nothing, the final term that I need to clarify here. By the nothing, in its fullest sense, I mean the abyssal yet constitutive lack of self-sufficiency or ground. One encounters the nothing always and everywhere, in its most concrete ways; the nothing is the rumbling of my stomach, my loneliness at my lack of friendship, and the impossibility of by my power trespassing the horizon of death. This nothing constitutes me; I am in not making myself exist and in not keeping myself in existence. The nothing is not at all an empty, purely negative logical negation. This nothing is prior to and allows for logical negation in the first place.

Given the course that I have indicated that this study will take, a reader will have probably noticed the absence of a number of significant figures of phenomenology. As

the result of his systematic development of an ethics that takes into account the full range of human affectivity, Dietrich von Hildebrand is perhaps the first and most obvious omission. His *Ethics* along with the supporting investigations in *The Heart* and *The Nature of Love* are together an original contribution to the tradition of phenomenological value ethics. There are, however, two reasons that I exclude him from this work. The first, albeit biographical reason, is that Scheler is the founder and is considered the most significant figure of value ethics.[45] His *Formalism* appeared as a whole in 1916, while Von Hildebrand's *Ethics* was published only in 1953; though it was preceded by Von Hildebrand's habilitation in 1918, *Morality and Ethical Value Knowledge*, this latter work does not carry the weight of his mature *Ethics*, let alone of Scheler's already established *Formalism*. Scheler was in his own lifetime one of the giants of the phenomenological movement, equal in rank to Husserl and Heidegger. He is more influential than Von Hildebrand, who often has been limited to Catholic circles, and as such Scheler stands as the principle representative of value ethics.[46]

The second, philosophical and more substantive reason for excluding Von Hildebrand is that the arguments that I will give in Chapter 2 against Scheler's separation of bearers of value from values hold for Von Hildebrand's value ethics as well. The source of normativity for Von Hildebrand, like Scheler, is value, which is intrinsically

---

[45] Loidolt 2017, 2, 3.
[46] Another reason that could be gathered to exclude Von Hildebrand is related to this Catholicism. His thought is permeated by Catholicism, to the point that his work often jumps so quickly to God that it has been characterized as a philosophical theology, rather than philosophy as such. For instance, the latter two parts of *The Heart* are explicitly theological, concerning the heart of Jesus and divine affectivity. In *Ethics*, he writes that a significant portion of the "moral data" with which the work is concerned are "the lives of the saints,…the liturgy of Holy Church, and, above all, in the Gospel" (*Ethics*, 2). The rigors of the phenomenological method are not always observed in exchange for interpretations of the theological. In no way should this be taken as a rejection of the importance of Von Hildebrand's work, but only as an explanation for his exclusion as not always adhering to the phenomenological method.

separate from its bearers. Von Hildebrand begins his *Ethics* with the claim that there is a

"fundamental difference between the moral sphere and all other spheres of human

existence. As soon as a moral problem arises, we are transported into a 'world' of its

own."[47] Already here, the problem of Deep Kantianism becomes evident; Von

Hildebrand, with Kant, assumes that ethics is distinct from all other spheres, which means

that ethics is distinct from the ontological sphere as well. Ontology and ethics remain

separated, a separation that Von Hildebrand continues to reinforce in his ethical theories.

Values are described as the "character that enables an object to become the source of an

affective response or to motivate the will shall be termed by us 'importance.'"[48] This

"importance is synonymous with the important-in-itself, with the value."[49] Value is the

intrinsically important, that which on its own basis is valuable, apart from any condition

or relation. The domain of values is not conditioned by any ontological concern with the

entities of the world. Even when Von Hildebrand speaks of the value of being, he writes

that "every being, whatever its specific character and nature may be, in some way

participates in this value."[50] The value that a being has insofar as it is a being, is still

derivative from a value that is independent of this being. This value is independent of

and prior to a concrete being precisely because the being only participates in the value.

But participation implies that the being is subsequent and subject to the rule of the value

over the being. Value is raised above being as belonging to a different order. Von

Hildebrand writes that "*[t]he notion of good and the notion of being are not identical.*"[51]

---

[47] *Ethics*, 1.
[48] *Ibid.*, 26.
[49] *Ibid.*, 75.
[50] *Ibid.*, 157.
[51] *Ibid.*, 152.

This makes clear that he, like Kant, separates the domains of being and goodness, and even when he attempts to bring them together, the worth of being is only derivative, from a realm other than that of values. Being and goodness remain divorced in the complete lack of an ontological foundation for value.

Though Rogelio Rovira has argued that for Von Hildebrand "value is in itself a being," this possibility only worsens the problem of value.[52] For if value is itself a being, if it is to be anything other than Platonism, such value must be either reducible to the concrete ontological entity, in which case value becomes an unnecessary multiplication of terms; or it is not, in which case, the divide between being and goodness remains. Despite Von Hildebrand's position that affectivity is directed toward the ethical insofar as "the heart conforms to the value," "the important in itself," this only reinforces the divide between goodness and being.[53] For affections are removed from the world; they are not responses to ontological or existential affairs and situations, but to values. Affectivity is revelatory of the ethical without reference to the ontological. This lack of intrinsic reference to the ontological is the source of the impossibility, according to Von Hildebrand, of reducing value to anything else, "because the notion of value refers to an ultimate datum."[54] As ultimate, value, the important-in-itself, is self-sufficient and not dependent on anything else for its foundation or explanation. As the important-in-itself, value is removed from the world. There are two problems that result; the first is that, as already mentioned, Von Hildebrand retains Scheler's divide between values and bearers of value. For values in their purest form are the important-in-itself, which does not

---

[52] Rovira 2015, 127.
[53] *The Heart*, 37.
[54] *Ethics*, 99.

belong to any of the things or events of the world. Things only participate in value, which is other than and independent of them. Consequently, through sharing Scheler's structure, Von Hildebrand is too close to Kant. He is haunted by the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness. The second problem is that, by characterizing genuine value as the important-in-itself, Von Hildebrand has simply further pushed back the question of the character of value without answering it. What is value? Though Von Hildebrand would say that this is the wrong question, since it ignores the irreducible quality of value, to place value outside of the world as not constituted by any concrete singular being ignores a fundamental condition of the ethical. Ethics is concerned with how one lives with others and things, and so how one feels about others and things. That is, ethics is about singulars, the particular situations, persons, events, affairs, and things with which one dwells and spends one's life. What matters, what one cares about, are these particulars; one loves one's friend, spouse, parent, or sibling, and loves these persons as this friend, this spouse, this parent, or this sibling. One loves not as an abstract value, removed from things, or loves another person because she participates in some value beyond her, but loves her for herself. By removing value from these concrete persons, Von Hildebrand effectively empties value of content. The important-in-itself is empty; there is no important-in-itself, but only the concrete other person herself. Importance, if not this person as this person, is void of meaning. Any ethics that turns to a notion of importance will miss the singularity and concreteness that belongs to a person or being apart from importance. Importance, if anything besides this person, becomes empty at best or at worst denigrates the person. For if it is not this person, then it is nothing particular; it is an empty universal. Von Hildebrand therefore not only remains

too close to Kant, but perhaps even makes the problem of grounding a phenomenological ethics more difficult, which is ultimately why he is not under consideration in this dissertation.

Another prominent omission is that of Gabriel Marcel, whose thought is thoroughly permeated by a heartfelt care for the other person, the 'thou,' in Marcel's own terms. There are two characteristics of Marcel's philosophy that prevent it from being discussed here. First, and most evidently, Marcel never provides a systematic ethics. In general, his writings consist of deeply insightful but sporadic and irregular reflections on concrete existence, and this quality of his work extends to his ethical reflections. A great deal of effort would be required to organize his various thoughts on ethical themes into a whole, and then to develop from this whole a systematic ethics. One would have to first say what exactly Marcel's ethics is, before evaluating whether it as a phenomenological ethics escapes Deep Kantianism and has an adequate basis. This would require at least another book length study in itself, and thus remains beyond the scope of this project. The second reason for excluding Marcel is that whatever ethical claims he might give are subsequent to the project here in this dissertation, which is to show the phenomenological and experiential unity between goodness and being. Marcel himself does not directly address this connection; in his ethical reflections, he assumes this unity between goodness and being. Though this might be, and is, as I will argue in this dissertation, correct, Kant divided nature and freedom for ethics, and this divide must be overcome by explicitly showing how being and goodness are primordially united. Marcel, however, does not address this condition for a phenomenological ethics.[55]

---

[55] At this point, one might also, because of the term *thou*, rightfully wonder about the place of Martin Buber. Buber, however, does not employ the phenomenological method; though his reflections on the

There are also further absences from broader Twentieth-century continental thought, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida who all engage in ethical discourse. I have excluded them, however, since this study is the prolegomena to a specifically phenomenological ethics. It seeks to establish ethics on a phenomenological ground, in the very structure of lived experience itself, to show how everyday life is itself always already ethical. Gadamer and Ricoeur are fundamentally hermeneuts, concerned with interpretations of the already given, already intelligible in understanding and intellect. They work to interpret this as that, with the emphasis on the as, the interpretation that can be variously constructed or deconstructed. This latter phrase appeals also to Derrida, whose method of deconstruction, of pitting oppositions and binaries to undermine such juxtapositions, departs from phenomenology. In the case of all three of these figures, the concern is with what is already given in experience and has been subject to the particular interpretations that have been imposed upon this given. But the task of phenomenology is to encounter this given as such, to be receptive to the given as it shows itself in its structure and origin before being forced into artificial concepts. Scheler defines this phenomenological task as follows: "[p]henomenological experience alone yields facts 'themselves' and, hence, immediately, i.e., not in a way mediated by symbols [or] signs."[56] That is, the phenomenological method is attuned to that which is given in experience itself, the existential content encountered in daily life.

_____

relation to the thou are of the utmost significance for ethics, they are not grounded in lived experience as such. *I and Thou* begins with the assertion, without phenomenological evidence, that for a person there are "two basic words he can speak;" the "word pairs" of "I-Thou" and "I-It" (*I and Thou*, 53). That these word pairs do not emerge from the structures of existence is made clear when Buber states that basic words "by being spoken…establish a mode of existence" (*Ibid.*). This makes clear that Buber is not following the phenomenological method. His reflections on the thou begin with an assertion into which existence is subsequently molded and within which existence and experience are understood. The priority of lived experience is not adhered to; thus, as not phenomenological, Buber remains excluded from this study.
[56] *Formalism*, 50.

All signs or symbols, all language, references these given contents, without which language would be meaningless and empty. Phenomenology is unique in that it aims directly at these originary givens that allow for there to be something at which words and symbols are directed. Before one can ask questions of language, one must first be open to what is given that later becomes ostended by signs. Thus, phenomenology is prior to the task of hermeneutics or deconstruction. This is of course not to say that the work of Ricoeur, Gadamer, and Derrida is irrelevant to ethics, but that since it does not proceed according to the methods of phenomenology, it is subsequent to an investigation into the givens of ethical and ontological experience. This project does not address these figures in its appeal to the existential grounds that are the conditions for the possibility of any later interpretation or deconstruction. As a whole, my method here in this study attempts to follow Scheler's fundamental insight about phenomenology in its openness to the given; I am attempting to investigate lived experience in terms of what is given and experienced in concrete daily life.[57]

Before the argument begins, another, final limit must also be set down; this work is fundamentally not a politics. The concern here is on the concrete, lived experience of encountering another singular human person, and how this encounter informs how the self is and ought to behave with respect to the concrete Other. Thus, collectives, such as states, nations, or global communities, are from the beginning excluded. Nations, states,

---

[57] This does not mean that I favor Scheler's method to the exclusion of all other phenomenological methods. Briefly, to avoid being bogged down in questions of method, what appeals to me in Scheler's phenomenological method is its orientation to the originary given. But, as readers of the early Heidegger will know well, Heidegger also in his early lecture courses focuses on givenness, meaningfulness, and the self-sufficiency of the given to reveal itself without being forced into an artificial conceptual system. I am sympathetic to this method, as much as I am to Scheler's; however, I have privileged Scheler here if only because his reflections on method in *Formalism* are far more succinct and pointed than Heidegger's extensive and complex investigations, making Scheler's phenomenological method a far easier example of the method that is present in this study.

and governments are constituted by the concrete persons who are grouped under them, indicating that nations are at a certain level derivative. They inhere in concrete persons, and whatever might be said about what is right or wrong for a nation to do, depends wholly upon the relation of the so-called national or civil act to the concrete persons who exist. As being composed only of its individuals, the nation has borrowed existence; only concrete persons are real, without whom there would be no nation at all. This means that what is right or wrong at the national level is contingent upon what is right or wrong at the level of the person. The latter must consequently be determined first. One should also note that when it comes to questions of national or government policy, these policies are either, in the best cases aimed at the good of concrete persons, or in the worst case aimed at harming concrete persons. Consequently, whether such policies should be enacted or avoided always assumes something definitive about the constitution and identity of such concrete persons, and thus what is good or bad for these persons as singular concrete individuals.[58] But this is an ethical assumption, prior to and grounding any and all later political judgments about groups of concrete persons.

 With these clarifications and limitations established, let us now turn to the argument.

---

[58] In between the readily apparent poles of Lockean individual political atomism and Aristotelian communitarianism, there is what I understand as a personalist or perhaps other-oriented approach. Though what I am ascribing to might sound as if it were too close to political atomism, I reject altogether the thesis that the self ever exists by herself. She exists through others. However, this rejection does not lead to the thesis of communitarianism either. For the self exists precisely through this other, this concrete other that is before the self, such as these parents, this friend, and this sibling. Each of these concrete persons exists through other concrete relations to other others. What I suspect that the communitarian thesis misses is this originary singularity, or better yet, this originary personality. The danger of communitarianism is that it privileges a group as what gives meaning to the singular persons who exist in relations to others. But that there are other others hardly means that these others can be summed up as a group. Rather, they must be recognized in their personality as unique persons who exist in relation to other unique persons. Inherent relationality to the other does not entail communitarianism, which would in fact cover up the personality of the other.

Chapter One
The Challenge of Deep Kantianism

The tradition of phenomenological ethics is characterized by the monumental works of Max Scheler in value ethics and Emmanuel Levinas in alterity ethics; both have made revolutionary discoveries regarding the fundamental characteristics and tendencies of the ethical experience. Yet, few attempts have been made to put these two schools into dialogue, to combine their worthwhile contributions. This is perhaps to be expected, given their different approaches to the ethical, the first locating the source of normativity in felt values and the second in the ethical relation to the Other. Yet, the two approaches can be united by an attempt to confront a problem that they both share in common, the problem of Deep Kantianism, the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness. The ethics of both Scheler and Levinas are troubled by a divide between being and goodness in which the domains of the ontological and the ethical are separate. Together, they are united by the need to respond to this problem that troubles them.

The sources of normativity, the standards of right and wrong, are not to be located in daily life or the structures of existence. The good or the right cannot be based on reality, while this reality is itself barren of ethical implications. A harsh divide between the ethical and the ontological seems to be wrong, though; for the ethical, if it is to govern actions it must refer to how I am to dwell in a world with others and things, how I am to deal with the affairs of life—an ontological task. Likewise, the ontological, if it is about that which is, seems to imply something about how I am to deal with the persons and things with which I spend my life, the persons and things that seem, insofar as I simply encounter them, to place demands upon me, so that I must respond to them in a

41

certain way—an ethical task. But with Kant, a systematic divide between the ontological

and the ethical arises, a divide that adopts and develops the is-ought dichotomy of

Hume.[59] Insofar as the phenomenological ethics of Scheler and Levinas remain haunted

by the divorce between being and goodness that has its roots in the non-

phenomenological ethics of Kant, there seems to be a rift between the ethical and the

ontological. I will begin this chapter with Kant's formulation of the divide between

ethics and ontology, which will be followed by a section on the implications that this

divide entails. To conclude the chapter, I will respond to an objection that suggests that

Kant does have a place for love in ethics, that Kant is not as harsh as I have suggested;

however, this does not succeed, I will argue, to vindicate Kant, leaving the path open to

the resonance of Deep Kantianism in phenomenological ethics.

The Origins of Deep Kantianism

Kant explicitly emphasizes the magnitude of the dichotomy between being and

goodness in the *Critique of Judgment*, writing that

> There is an incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature,
> as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, so

---

[59] One could most likely trace the origins of a divide between nature and freedom back to Descartes, who focuses exclusively in *The Meditations* and *The Discourse* on questions of epistemic certainty, culminating in the indubitable certitude of the *cogito*. In this very focus, there is an absence of ethical questioning, and even more significantly, an absence of the Other, of the ethical relation itself; Descartes meditates alone. The silence regarding ethics implies already that ethics is somehow derivative, and that the concern for the good can only be determined later, subsequent to epistemic concerns. Yet these epistemic concerns are themselves the concerns of a self that begins cut off from its world and the Other, problematizing how this self knows anything or even anyone else. The self seeks to be certain to and for itself apart from others. The Other is from the beginning radically excluded. There is a fundamental egoism, and thus absence of ethical consideration, at the core of *The Meditations*. Hume in his ethics is arguably perhaps working out these implications of the lack of an ethics to their logical conclusions, but Kant is the first to make these distinctions between nature and freedom, being and goodness, systematic and rigorous, the foundation of an ethics itself. Thus, the story as such begins with Kant. A more historically-oriented study, would, though, make a worthwhile contribution to understanding the path of the separation of being and goodness.

that from the former to the latter…no transition is possible, just as if there were so many different worlds, the first of which can have no influence on the second.[60]

The world of nature, of being, is entirely distinct from the world of freedom, of goodness. They are separated from each other as if different worlds, without any overlap whatsoever. The gulf or gap that separates nature and freedom is incalculable, a distance that cannot be crossed. There is a decisive break between these two universes, which from the beginning are in opposition. In particular, there is no movement from nature to freedom; in other words, the world of nature, of being, is entirely unable to inform freedom of the measure of goodness. The guidelines for the ethical life cannot be grounded in any character of nature or existence. The realm of being is devoid of ethical implications. The standards of goodness will be found outside of nature and being. Goodness and being are thus completely incommensurable with one another.[61]

---

[60] *Critique of Judgment*, 5: 175-176.

[61] There should be note that this passage from the Third *Critique* continues on to explain in more detail Kant's motivation for writing a critique of judgment; "the latter [freedom] **should** have an influence on the former [nature], namely the concept of freedom should make the end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world; and nature must consequently also be able to be conceived in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of the ends that are to be realized in it in accordance with the laws of freedom" (CJ, 5: 176). The lawfulness of the form of nature refers to the beauty of nature; the beautiful makes manifest the moral law, in particular in the ideal of beauty. The ideal of beauty for Kant is "a beauty fixed by a concept of objective purposiveness" (*Ibid*., 5: 232). That is, beauty in its highest variety will be regulated by a definite end. Something is beautiful according to the ideal insofar as this thing fulfills its purpose. But "[o]nly that which has the end of its existence in itself, the human being, who determines his ends himself through reason…is capable of an ideal of beauty, just as the humanity in his person, as intelligence, is alone among all the objects in the world capable of the ideal of perfection" (*Ibid*., 5: 233). The ideal of beauty is constituted by the human, and in particular by the human as rational, through her powers of reason. The ideal has its highest instantiation in "the expression of the **moral**" (*Ibid*., 5: 235). In other words, the ideal of beauty, the height and standard of all beauty, is beautiful only insofar as it is moral and rational. The beautiful comes not from the domain of nature, but from freedom. Nature is not intrinsically beautiful, but only participates in the beauty that comes from reason and the moral law. This suggests that Kant's attempt to reunify nature and freedom fails; nature is neglected entirely in favor of freedom. There can be no reunification if nothing is taken from one side, the side of nature; yet nature remains entirely absent in the final account, stripped of any proper dignity. The sublime too for Kant collapses into reason; as he writes, "nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature" (*Ibid*., 5: 262). Whatever sublimity nature has is borrowed as indicative of the superiority of the moral vocation beyond nature. As obeying the moral law, the human being remains infinitely elevated above nature. Therefore, once again, no reunification occurs; Kant has elevated reason and morality while denigrating nature in the case of both the beautiful and the

In *The Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant provides the basis for his strict opposition of nature and freedom. He states that laws "are either laws of **nature** or laws of **freedom**. The science of the first is called **physics**, that of the other is **ethics**; the former is also called the doctrine of nature, the latter the doctrine of morals."[62] Freedom is fundamentally the domain of morality, of the ethical; this ethical world is governed by its own laws that are not the same as the laws of nature. The material world itself also has its own laws, which are not moral laws. There are two distinct worlds that operate according to their own equally distinct standards and measures. What is proper in one will not be proper in the other. Thus, the laws or standards that determine each realm must be investigated separately without connection, since such laws have no basis in the other. While the realm of nature is ordered by "laws in accordance with which everything happens," the realm of freedom is ordered by "laws in accordance with which everything ought to happen."[63] Nature is the domain of what is the case, of what actually occurs, while to the domain of freedom belongs what ought to be case, what should be. Ontology, the domain of the *is*, stands against ethics, the domain of the *ought*. Being and goodness are consequently entirely divorced.[64] The laws of each domain are not

---

sublime. Yet even if one assumes that Kant somehow succeeds in reunifying nature and freedom in the *Critique of Judgment*, what matters in the first place is that the divide is there; nature and freedom are divided from the beginning and thus must be brought together. What I wish to suggest in this study is that there is never a divide between nature and freedom, between being and goodness; reunification is not necessary, even for the foundation for a phenomenological ethics, since being and goodness are from the beginning joined together. This jointure is what must be shown, and once shown, will function as the overcoming of the break between nature and freedom.

[62] *Groundwork*, 4: 387.

[63] *Ibid.*, 4: 388.

[64] I will use good and right roughly synonymously throughout this dissertation; however, there is a distinction between them, in which goodness often refers to what is desirable for a being, what completes a being or brings it happiness, while the right is the law that the being must follow, the moral duty that stands as an obligation to a being. Kant of course favors the right, duty, to the exclusion of the good; but from an ethical perspective as such, what is relevant for the dissertation is that whatever one calls the source of normativity—the right or the good—such source is not located for Kant in the concrete world of lived existence, in the world of nature.

grounded in the other. The rules of existence will not inform a person of how she should

live, and the rules that do inform her how to live are not related to the rules of existence,

are not found somehow within existence. Kant here systematizes Hume's is-ought

dichotomy, so that the entire system of his critical philosophy operates following a firm

rupture between is and ought in which ethics is completely separate from ontology. At

the core of Kant's ethics is this assumption that is and ought are dichotomous and cannot

be derived from one another.

Kant does seek to justify this assumption that rejects nature as a source of

normativity. He states that "a law, if it is to hold morally, that is, as a ground of an

obligation, must carry with it absolute necessity."[65] Right and wrong must always be

right and wrong; the standards of morality cannot change. What is right and good, must

be the morally correct action in every case where a law applies. Irrespective of whatever

changes in circumstances that might occur, the criteria of ethics must always remain the

same. Consequently, "the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of

the human being or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed."[66] The world

belongs to the domain of nature, in which it and all of the things that it contains

continuously change and alter, never remaining constant. Yet morality itself is supposed

to always bind those subject to it, indicating that the world cannot be the basis of ethics.

In particular, human nature is not adequate as a standard of morality, since it too, like the

world, belongs to nature. The structure of the human being as within the domain of

existence, of being, varies and is mutable. It does not carry with itself any necessity, but

could be otherwise than it is. It is particular and contingent. Morality, however,

---

[65] *Ibid.*, 4: 389.
[66] *Ibid.*

according to Kant requires a standard and source that is not contingent, a source that will be the basis for obligation everywhere and always. The injunctions of the moral law prohibiting murder, theft, and assault and enjoining benevolence, generosity, and caring for the less fortunate remain binding on all persons regardless of time and place.

Rightly, Kant seeks to defend the necessity of the ethical. Certainly, murder and theft are always wrong and charity and humility are always good. As informing the person how she is to act, the ethical says what she should and should not do, or what is worthy or unworthy of her humanity. As a human being, she is somehow subject to ethics that in commanding her to live in a particular way grants a meaningful character to life. The ethical thus becomes the source of worth and meaningfulness, elevating the human beyond the status of a thing. What Kant is attempting to do is to capture the wellspring from which the worth and goodness of life flows, to capture what constitutes the core of the person. This worth must somehow be permanent and necessary, lest as it fades away the worth of personality vanishes as well.

Taken in its narrowest sense, nature or being, as referring to the totality of the order of cause and effect for Kant, cannot provide this worth and measure of the ethical. For as Kant correctly observes, if nature was only the object of scientific knowledge, if nature was only a set of abstract, isolated facts and objects that have no inherent connection to any other object, then nature would indeed have nothing to say regarding the ethical. Nature, as "the distance between the Sun and Earth is 93 million miles," "water is dihydrogen monoxide," or "volcanic island arcs are the result of oceanic crust being subducted beneath continental crust," cannot inform how the person is to live. None of these objective facts, derived from measurement and experimentation, have a

place for the good. As a mere object of knowledge that is posited in its measurability and experimentality, nature is removed from the sphere of the ethical. This is a narrow sense of nature, as what is knowable and reducible to rational cognition. However, this narrow sense excludes by definition any broader sense of nature or being as more than the object represented to the powers of rational cognition. Nature becomes the mere object of abstract knowledge that only exists insofar as it is subject to the powers of reason, as constructed by reason. But the concrete world of being that exceeds the powers of knowledge and comes upon the person as beyond her and allowing for there to be objects of knowledge at all, the broad and rich sense of being or nature as something given to the person that is not subject to her, is also rejected by Kant in his dismissal of nature or being as the basis for the ethical. Though Kant properly notices that nature in its narrow sense as the object of science is not a suitable foundation for an ethics, he wrongly includes nature or being in its richness as given to the person in his understanding of the world as unable to ground an ethics. That is, the world that includes the actually existing character of the person in nature, as contingent and particular, cannot be the source of worth and goodness for Kant. There is for Kant no sense of being or nature, including the meaning of being a human, in which such being or nature can provide the sources of normativity, since all being is mutable and particular. Human nature as belonging to being lacks the requisite stability.

Nature cannot provide a categorical imperative that "declares [an] action to be of itself objectively necessary without reference to some purpose."[67] Something that obtains categorically obtains necessarily in all cases, entirely independently of varying

---

[67] *Ibid*., 4: 415.

circumstances, purposes, or situations. In whatever particular occurrences one might imagine, the categorical continues to hold. The necessity of the categorical can thus never be founded on anything that is merely hypothetical, or contingent, in its existence. All the things of the world, including human nature, however, are contingent existences without any necessity. Kant here is rejecting the common claim of so many ethics, in particular virtue ethics, that the fulfillment and happiness of the human being is the source of normativity. He writes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that "it can never be a direct duty to promote one's happiness, still less can it be a principle of all duty."[68] Happiness and flourishing are not the basis for duty, for the obedience to the moral law for the sake of the law. The foundation for ethics cannot be located in the elevation of the human person. The domain of being, even the being of the human being, is stripped of its ability to serve as the ground of ethics. The being of the human person is not the root of goodness; the good, wherever it might be found, is not of this world, this person, or even this other person. The structure itself of the person, her existence, or her anthropology, do not provide the basis for the ethical. How she is to live is not related to her concrete existence. The standard of her behavior is not given by the objects, persons, or world with which her behavior is concerned. The good and the right belong to a wholly different order than that of existence.

Of particular significance, the passions, affects, and inclinations of the person are included within the domain of nature. Kant argues that "an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will."[69] Duty, acting for the sake of the moral law, excludes passion and all things that might be desired

---

[68] *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 93.
[69] *Groundwork*, 4: 400.

by the will. For an object of the will or of an inclination would refer to something in the world, some entity or feature of nature. Passion and inclination are concerned with worldly objects and consequences, and occur in the self insofar as it is affected by and subject to nature. Any object that the will furnishes will be empirical, and thus on the side of nature. As belonging to nature, inclination and its objects are thus contingent and particular, unable to furnish a categorical imperative. According to the Second *Critique*, "[a]ll the inclinations together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one's own happiness) constitute regard for oneself (*solipsismus*)."[70] As a whole, Kant understands the passions and desires of the person as aimed at her own happiness. He maintains that "[a]ll material practical principles as such are, without exception, of one and the same kind and come under the general principle of self-love or one's own happiness."[71] The affectivity of the human being is constituted such that all of her passions, desires, and feelings are fundamentally for herself alone. The heart is reduced to an egoism, in which according to nature, every affection is merely another property of a being that is ordered to its own ultimate pleasure that consists in happiness. By nature, affections are isolated properties of beings and are consequently contained in themselves with no object.

That is, the natural existence of a human being is inherently egoist for Kant. Inclination revolves around the pleasure of the self, which naturally desires the experience of pleasure and happiness. The ultimate natural inclination of the self is for the sake of its own pleasure. This means that for Kant, affectivity is not disclosive of the self in its existence or of its world, or, that as trapped in the self, returning wholly to the

---

[70] KPrV, 5: 73.
[71] *Ibid.*, 5: 22.

49

self, affectivity never reveals the structure of the self, let alone of the world. For inclination is a desire for desire, in which it wishes for its own furtherance without cessation, so that it can achieve a sum total of pleasure, the possession of which is happiness. Affectivity is located wholly within the domain of nature as part of the sensible aspect of the self, a domain in which the self pursues its own solipsistic pleasure without regard for the commands of the moral law. The self is wrapped up in itself in the pleasure of its desires. Affectivity only begets more affectivity in a closed circle. In Kant's own words, "every affect is blind, either in the choice of its end, or, even if this is given by reason, in its implementation."[72] This statement makes clear Kant's complete rejection of any ontologically let alone ethically indicative role for affectivity. Affections do not reveal anything about the world or the self. They exist in themselves, without reference to an end that they reveal. Desire does not inherently point toward an end that might fulfill it, or toward a means that allows for the fulfillment of such end. All objects are provided to affection through the powers of cognition. Such affection has no relation to any external object, preventing it from carrying with it its own thoughts and knowledge. There is no mode of thinking or knowledge that corresponds to the heart, which is deprived of any claim to being disclosive. Affectivity is reduced to mere non-ethical sensibility that is blind without reason, a concept of affectivity that will appear again in Levinas as discussed below in Chapter Four.

Since the moral law for Kant, as previously mentioned, must be necessary and universal, affectivity as belonging to changing nature is completely unable to provide such a stable foundation. The will as ethical can only "be determined by the formal

---

[72] *Critique of Judgment*, 5: 272.

principle of volition as such when an action is done from duty, where every material

principle has been withdrawn from it."[73] The withdrawal of all material principles refers

to the complete rejection of passion or inclination as morally indicative or relevant. A

material principle is that which refers to an chosen object for desires or inclinations, an

object that comes from experience. All objects of experience, insofar as they are existing

singular things or persons, are not permitted to enter the domain of morality. The world

of affection and sense are subject to the laws of nature, of determinate cause and effect.

The self in being subject to the laws of nature through affectivity is wholly determined,

preventing it from being free. With regard to this freedom, Kant writes that "[w]hat is

essential in every determination of the will by the moral law is that, as a free will – and so

not only without the cooperation of sensible impulses but even with rejection of all of

them and with infringement upon all inclinations insofar as they could be opposed to that

law – it is determined solely by the law."[74] This passage makes clear the level of hostility

that Kant has toward affectivity. Impulses and inclinations come from nature external to

the self, compelling it to act and react in a certain, determinate way. The self is not free

in its affectivity. Freedom is lacking, in Kant's view, for the self when subject to

affectivity as the result of the self's subjection therein to natural determination. Freedom

is defined in terms of the absence of inclination; affectivity and freedom do not mix. Any

motivation for freedom from affectivity would submit it to the sequence of cause and

effect, determining it wholly in an infinite series of cause and effect. As determined,

there would thus be no freedom. Freedom can only occur in the denial of affectivity and

nature. Kant writes that "independence from the determining causes of the world of

---

[73] *Groundwork*, 4: 400.
[74] KPrV, 5: 72.

sense…is freedom."[75] Freedom is interpreted in terms of breaking away from inclinations. It arises when the inclinations are put in check and called into question, so that freedom is the rupture with affective motivation, occurring in opposition to affectivity. Rather than being anything positive, freedom is understood wholly in its negativity, in how it constitutes the negation of affectivity and the determination of causality.

Kant does attempt to make this freedom more than negative when he clarifies that it is the "pure self-activity" of reason.[76] Will is the "I think" of theoretical reason transformed into the "I can" of practical reason. In a free will, a being says that it can, out of its own self, do something of its own accord. Freedom is to act out of oneself, to initiate a new sequence of cause and effect from within oneself apart from any prior determination of nature and affectivity. The person is her own ground of freedom. This ground is wholly internal to herself and her reason as act, as free will. Therefore, "[w]ith the idea of freedom the concept of autonomy is now inseparably combined."[77] Freedom means autonomy, the law of the self. It is the law of the self precisely because it originates in the self, where the self acts according to its own measure. The self rules itself through acting on its own basis. It is not subject to any exterior condition or cause. As acting out of itself, freedom is "a spontaneity so pure that it thereby goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford it."[78] Freedom in its autonomy is spontaneous, beginning from itself, not as a response to anything else. It causes itself without regard for any exteriority, thus representing a pure interiority that arises out of itself apart from

---

[75] *Groundwork*, 4: 452.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] *Ibid.*

any affect derived from sensible nature. The spontaneity of autonomy lifts the self in its

freedom to a world that is independent of being affected by an other. Though a person

"belongs to the world of sense, under laws of nature (heteronomy)," he most

fundamentally belongs "to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of

nature, are not empirical but grounded merely in reason."[79] Autonomy is ordered by its

own laws that it has provided for itself from itself as its own basis. A being can only be

autonomous when it is not subject to any other, when it submits only to its own rule.

Only a being that has a characteristic that allows it to escape the determination of nature

can be autonomous. This characteristic is freedom—spontaneously acting out of one's

own accord, the definition of autonomy. To this autonomy Kant opposes heteronomy,

the rule of the other. In heteronomy, a being is subject to an other, forced to undergo the

causality and determinism that constrain it on the basis of rules that are completely

foreign to it. There is no freedom if the beginning of a movement is from a source

external to the self. All impulses or inclinations are initiated by a material object that

imposes itself on the self from outside of the self. As such, the movement of passion is

determined by a heteronomous principle where the self is not the origin of its choice or

act. The act can be traced back to the imposition of the object on affectivity.

Heteronomy results when "the will would not give itself the law but a foreign impulse

would give the law to it by means of the subject's nature."[80] In its nature as sensible, the

self receives a foreign impulse that does not truly belong to it, that is not its own.

Inclination is fundamentally foreign to the self as such. This self is most truly its reason,

which "must regard itself as the author of its principles independently of alien

---

[79] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*, 4: 444.

influences."[81] Kant has drawn a harsh line between autonomy and heteronomy, in which anything that and anyone who is other are rejected. Any imposition by the other is an assault on the self's autonomy, its ability to give the law to itself.

This opposition of autonomy and heteronomy entails a thin concept of self, in which the humanity of the self is limited only to what originates in the self. For Kant, the self is only itself insofar as it is autonomous. Consequently, most of what is generally thought to constitute a self is excluded from Kant's definition of the self. Passions, inclinations, affectivity, sensation, and the body do not comprise the self as such. The entirety of the sensible, natural character of the human being is excluded as the result of being determined by heteronomy. As exposed to the exterior, as thrown under that which is other, the affective and bodily features of the self do not constitute the self. Anything that is caused by and so subject to heteronomy is eliminated from the definition of the self. The self becomes only what it can spontaneously generate out of itself, divorced from the world, passion, and others—the autonomy of pure freedom.

The autonomy of pure freedom is "the will's property of being a law to itself."[82] To be free means to give law to oneself, to order oneself and be governed by a standard that one is subject to on account of one having provided this standard to oneself. The self is unique in that it can give a law to itself; its freedom is the condition for the possibility of abiding by the law. Freedom then is "a causality in accordance with immutable laws but of a special kind."[83] What makes freedom more than a negative rejection of the inclinations, what makes freedom positive for Kant is its ability to choose to act

---

[81] *Ibid.*, 4: 448.
[82] *Ibid.*, 4: 447.
[83] *Ibid.*, 4: 446.

according to certain laws. The self as autonomous freedom can follow a law. The self is itself on the basis of its adherence to the self-given law that orders it, suggesting that to be a person means to follow the laws of freedom. As already established, these laws are entirely formal, opposed to any material principle from nature or others. In heeding the laws of freedom, the self can only be motivated by the moral law itself, since any other principle would be a material principle. Kant confirms this in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* where he defines the predisposition to personality as "the susceptibility to respect for the moral law *as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice*."[84] When no natural, passionate inclination is allowed as a motive, the only possible motivation is for the sake of the law as law. The law itself is the source of motivation to live ethically. Most significantly, the predisposition to personality, the capacity to be motivated by the moral law, is what constitutes a person. An entity is a person only insofar as this entity in its freedom may adhere to the commands of the moral law. The meaning of being a person refers not to something in the world or even in human nature as susceptible to heteronomous affects, but refers to being open for the moral law. Therefore, the "idea of the moral law alone…is personality itself."[85] Personality occurs only in a being who follows the moral law. Moral law, and the capacity to act according to moral law, is what defines the person. This means that the law is not defined according to the person, but that the person is defined according to the law. A person is a person only insofar as she is subject to the moral law, without which she would not be a person. Her status as a person is dependent on the moral law.

---

[84] *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 6:27.
[85] *Ibid*., 6:28.

This dependence suggests that the person obtains worth only from the law itself. In *The Groundwork*, Kant remarks regarding moral worth that "morality, and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity."[86] Dignity refers to what "is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent."[87] Sole intrinsic value or worth for Kant belongs only to morality, which is the source of all dignity. The human person's worth comes precisely from her capacity for the moral law, which is to say, from the moral law itself. The moral is that alone which is innately valuable. The person is not herself valuable, except insofar as she participates in such value by her openness to morality.[88] The worth of the person is contingent on morality. That this morality is elevated above the person is evident by Kant's phrasing that humans have dignity through participating in the moral law. Their worth is derivative from morality, rather than from themselves or any feature of their nature. Persons are therefore not intrinsically important, but only valuable insofar as they receive such value from the moral law. For the being that becomes the person, only becomes the person on the condition that she is susceptible to morality, on the condition that she submits to the moral law that is not founded in any concept of her own existing character or nature. In her real being, the person lacks inherent goodness and worth. When Kant claims that the

---

[86] *Groundwork*, 4:435.

[87] *Ibid.*, 4:434.

[88] In other words, despite Kant's second formulation of the Categorical Imperative that states that humans are ends in themselves, the case seems to be that humans are ends in themselves precisely because they are capable of following the moral law, meaning that the moral law itself is what grants them their being constituted as ends in themselves. Despite, though, the appealing character of the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative, it is not able to be retained from Kant's ethics. For in the Kantian meaning, it denigrates the person, rather than elevating her by understanding the person in terms of capacity for law, rather than on her own existential terms. Another difficulty that confronts the second formulation is that it does not inform how to navigate the complexity of the relation between self and other; one is to equally respect as an end in itself the humanity in both oneself and in others, which seems to me to threaten a sort of allergic egoism, in which one performs the bare minimum kindness to others while remaining in oneself, since after all, one is an end in oneself, allowing for one to emphasize oneself before the other.

person is an end in herself, and that thus she has some measure of proper dignity, this must be understood within the context of the separation of the moral law, of the ethical, from the existence of the person. Kant has made clear that dignity only enters into a being insofar as the law has entered into this being. Goodness does not consist in persons, but in the rectitude of the law. The things, passions, and others of existence lack inherent goodness. The world and nature is left barren of goodness, a goodness that comes solely from the moral law that is formal, without a material principle of any particular object. The person receives her goodness from a source not of the world or of her nature.[89] An abyssal chasm irrupts that separates the moral law from nature, freedom from nature, goodness from being.

The Implications of Deep Kantianism

The implications of this divide are immense. The first, anthropological implication is that the person is divided from herself, split by the chasm between freedom and nature. There is the affective, bodily, and worldly character of the person, which is subject to the heteronomous causality of nature, in contrast to the rational character that belongs to the autonomous freedom of the moral law. The person is not unified, being split between two worlds between which no transition is possible. In being split, the person is not, however, evenly split; *qua* person, she is comprised by freedom rather than nature. Kant has a definite preference for the aspect of the person on the side of freedom,

---

[89] Only that aspect of the person that is independent of nature, independent of her body and affectivity, is a space for goodness. But what constitutes most of the person—her concrete nature of body and heart, her fears, desires, hopes, and joys—has no capacity in itself for the moral. Human nature as reduced to autonomous freedom is divorced from the world itself, since this nature is defined as what comes from the self alone, the pure self prior to and above the world. The supposedly human nature of freedom does not seem much like human nature, having been removed entirely from this world.

to the extent that Kant understands the person in terms of the thin concept of self. That is, the person is not enmeshed in her worldly passions, inclinations, and others. She is pure freedom, a pure "I can," without an object or reference to any other. As autonomous, the person has no place for heteronomy, for being in the world. The self is without a world, contained in its own autonomous self-activity that originates in itself, which as originating in the self returns to the self insofar as the thin self has no inherent relation to the world. The person is trapped in a solipsism without being able to encounter others. She must, then, turn to all that she has left as a basis for ethics—the autonomy of her freedom.

However, this autonomy is fundamentally empty. For the autonomy of the self arises from itself without being affected by any other source; out of its own "I can," the self acts and wills, without any prior conditions or causes. As autonomous and worldless, it begins and ends with itself. Yet this autonomous law for ethics is necessarily problematic, for if one turns to the evidence of lived, daily existence, the person does not exist in herself; she is not her own origin and does not sustain herself. The givens of birth and death indicate this insufficiency of the person who finds herself thrown into an existence from which she might be torn at any moment. She did not make herself exist and she cannot survive by her own power. She can do nothing to hold herself in being, to prevent her death. In every moment that she continues to live, she depends not on herself but on food, water, shelter, and companionship. Her very thoughts and passions are about some object, referring to an entity, person, or situation in the world. One feels love for an other, sorrow at the pain of the other, or thinks about what one can do to help the other. As Merold Westphal argues, "something other than myself is the condition of the

possibility of my thought. Autonomy presupposes a prior heteronomy."[90] As not self-sufficient, the person is conditioned by her ground that gives her being to her. Most pertinently, this is evident especially in her choices and freedom that Kant claims belong to her autonomy. For every choice is a choice for a certain possibility or object; to choose is to choose…. I choose to read this book, choose to go to a certain school, choose to spend time with this or that friend. Each of these choices assumes the object of choice, the book, school, or friend. One chooses a definite possibility to enact, without which choice would be impossible. There can be no choice when there is nothing to choose. To freely choose, to have freedom, presupposes that there is something in particular that one can choose. Freedom cannot exist if there is nothing to choose. Moreover, every choice is motivated; one makes a choice precisely for the consequences of the enactment of such choice. A person goes to a school that is good for her choice of degree specialization; a person chooses to read a book in the hope that she will enjoy it; a person spends time with someone who she wants to know better; or a person does not move to a new city because it is too expensive. There is something attractive or unattractive that motivates the choices one makes. The question of choice, of choosing between possibilities, is a question of desiring or avoiding the object of choice. As motivating choice, an object is desired or undesired, indicating that choice is always motivated by something else besides itself. There is no pure choice, no pure autonomy. Any autonomy, any ability to choose freely, assumes that something has already been

---

[90] Westphal 2017, 190. The counter that Kant is speaking of an a priori autonomy, before all experience, does not vindicate him; for the claim here is precisely that any a priori autonomy will have been conditioned by an even more prior heteronomy, since the very existence of an a priori autonomy assumes an origin that is the ground for such an a priori autonomy, or in other words, a heteronomy that would be the ultimate a priori.

given to choose. A person is responding to the possibilities that have been given to her. Choice, freedom, is thus a response, and not a pure spontaneity. Insofar as freedom is a response to certain possibilities, it is intrinsically related to the objects of such possibilities, suggesting that freedom is itself a response to the demands and responsibilities imposed upon the self by the things and others with which it lives. Thus, the genuine challenge of freedom is to respond to, to be receptive to, the demands of an other. Freedom is relational, related to an other: freedom is heteronomous. As conditioned by heteronomy, autonomy is thus not able out of itself to provide moral principles, since autonomy, as empty without heteronomy, can only give what has been conditioned by heteronomy. This would mean then that the principles of autonomy must be traced back to their source in the relationality of heteronomy, mandating a turn to heteronomy as the source of ethics. Autonomy alone is empty in itself, preventing it altogether from providing the foundation for ethics. By placing his ethics on the foundation of autonomy, Kant has given the ethical a fundamentally empty and thus unstable ground. Without heteronomy, autonomy as empty cannot inform the ethical. Initially empty of any content or form, any ethics derived from it will be equally empty. Any precepts that one attempts to construct out of autonomy will be artificial impositions on the things or persons that they are supposed to govern.

Even if one assumes with Kant that autonomy can fashion the basis for the ethical, the worth that the person might have from being autonomous does not belong to her. Her worth comes only from her capacity for the moral law, which alone is good. Only as for the law, as for the sake of the law, does the person have dignity. The person is consequently entirely deprived of genuine goodness, since only the law and not the

person as an existing being is inherently good. Any goodness that she possesses is borrowed from the moral law, which is removed from all of the conditions of the world and the self as part of the world. Morality as freedom is entirely opposed to nature, suggesting that morality is isolated in itself according to its own standard, entirely separated from reality. Yet, though so isolated, morality for Kant is to serve as the foundation for value and worth, so that no other source of value can be recognized. The concrete beings of life, including persons, are to be measured solely by their relation to the moral law. The person lacks intrinsic value.

This points to the second implication of the divide between freedom and nature; if the moral law is itself separated by a gulf from nature, any and all content of the law would fail to have relevance to life itself and such life will be empty of intrinsic goodness. Whatever constitutes the moral law will inherently be removed from the structures of reality, so that there is abstract value and goodness on one side and bare existence and being on the other. The worth of the law thus becomes an empty fiction, since its value is devoid of any relation to life. The law would be an artificial imposition upon the world. For whatever the precepts and commands of the law might be, since they are not founded in the world that they supposedly govern, they can have no relevance to such world. If a command is not defined and grounded in the concrete situations that it is supposed to govern, if it does not speak it terms of these situations, then it is irrelevant to such situations. A law from one world that is entirely distinct from any other world cannot govern a world besides its own. If it were applied to a world besides its own, it would be a foreign intrusion on that other world that it attempts to rule. For the world that is governed by a law that is not its own, such a foreign law would be empty and

meaningless. The moral law, with its origins in the world of freedom as opposed to

nature, is abstracted from the world of nature. It is empty for nature, since its commands

have no bearing on the situations of nature. The domain of existence cannot be governed

by a law or goodness that refuses to take the features of existence into account. Human

life, in all of its situations, affairs, and events, cannot be subject to the at best empty

abstraction or at worst alien imposition of the moral law. The moral law, as the good,

belongs to a world that is not that of being. The good is removed from being, structured

according to its own measure that has nothing to do with concrete existence.

Through making the worth of the person contingent upon her capacity for the

moral law, Kant has also devalued the things of the world, including the person herself.

Even the human being in her affective proclivities, such as charity and joy, is without

worth, and thus her concrete experiential depth is reduced to the status of having no value

or goodness. The moral law detached from all content of existence stands in an

evaluative void. First, it does not refer to nature, to being; second, being does not provide

a basis for the moral law, for goodness. Since goodness itself is rooted in the moral law

that comes from outside of the world of nature, all of the beings, things, and features of

existence lack inherent goodness. Existence is deprived of any proper worth, having

been made morally bare by the abstraction of the moral law. Life and being lack any

worth that might belong to them, so that life is ethically empty. Goodness and worth are

absent from all the affairs of daily life, which is not ethically indicative. Goodness is not

concrete, is not contained in the things of the world, while the things of the world

themselves do not possess goodness. The moral law as the source of value not only

empties life of its value, but also threatens to turn value and goodness into mere

abstractions in which goodness cannot speak to a life that does not inform the terms of such goodness. Deontological ethics that attempt to place the source of normativity in the performance of one's duty to obey a law are thus, I suggest, inherently problematic. For if that law exists in itself, as deontology defines it, and should be followed for its own sake, then the basis for ethics is not in anything existing. It is located in a pure norm that does not refer to the existing things of the world. As such, the law is removed from the conditions of the world. Yet this violates the core of the meaning of ethics, which refers to how one is to conduct one's life, how one deals with the affairs, others, and things of life, problematizing how a law that does not take these into account for its foundation would be able to indicate how one is supposed to relate and respond to these. Kant's moral law is unable to govern life since it refuses to take the things of the world seriously, suggesting that deontology as a whole is inadequate to serve as the basis for ethics. If in response to this objection the law is in turn grounded in the things of the world, however, then such an ethics is no longer deontology, but an ethics of whatever thing that has been privileged as the existential source of normativity. If a system of ethics is to be relevant for those beings who must determine how they are to dwell, it must be founded in those persons and things with which those persons deal. Any ethics that is not grounded in an ontology of concrete, particular situations and affairs cannot provide a standard for how to go about these affairs. The situations of the world must inform an ethics. In other words, ethics must have an ontological and existential foundation, a foundation that I seek to give in this study. But Kant's deontological ethics in its rejection of the ontological does locate the source of normativity in the law alone,

opening up a massive chasm that threatens to empty existence of worth and value of concreteness.

An Objection to the Harsh Kant of Deep Kantianism

Recently, some scholarship has called into question the traditional reading of Kant's hostility to affectivity and inclination, and thus by implication the severity of the divide between nature and freedom. The most comprehensive account that challenges this interpretation is Parttyli Rinne's *Kant on Love*, which is especially significant given that its topic is what is often regarded as a paradigmatic instance of affectivity—love. After all, if there is room for love in Kant, then his ethics must not be entirely closed to the heartfelt dimension. Kant himself reinforces the possibility that there might be an opening to the heart in his philosophy in his *Lectures on Ethics*, where he states that "[t]he heart is the principle of moral disposition."[91] The heart, the domain of affectivity, can have a disposition toward morality. The heart becomes good and morally worthy when it orders itself toward the law, suggesting that insofar as the heart is capable of acting from the motive of the law, then it is good, which would allow for the redemption of affectivity in Kant's ethics. In this line of thought, Rinne seeks to defend "the emotive elements in Kant's moral philosophy," leading to a "warmer" Kant.[92] Love is necessary for Kant since through love, we can strive "to harmonize our emotive or affective faculties with what duty commands, in order to remove cognitive hindrances that make it more difficult for us to do our duty," culminating in "a cheerful heart in carrying out

---

[91] *Lectures on Ethics*, 36.
[92] Rinne 2019, 2.

one's duties."[93] Kant famously uses the example in the *Groundwork* of the philanthropist who despite his great natural sympathies for others, was overcome by grief and ceased to help them, but then, in the midst of his misery, tore himself away against all inclinations and from duty aided others again, giving his beneficence moral worth for the first time.[94] In contrast, Rinne suggests another picture; though moral worth might occur only for the first time when one tears oneself away from inclination, these inclinations are still difficult, and tempt one to fail one's duty. Through the cultivation of love and one's consequent dispositions, a person can remove the passions that would obstruct the performance of duty, while also reinforcing those passions that promote fulfilling the commands of duty. One should, for Kant, make one's inclinations such that one acts from duty with a cheerful, not a resentful, heart. In Rinne's view, love has a place in Kant's ethics insofar as love can become a love of duty, where one rejoices in the execution of the commands of the law. Though this love is not commanded, it can yet be nurtured, so that the law can be properly followed without the obstruction of inclinations that would turn one away from the law, culminating in the immediate following of the law for its own sake.

However, this warm Kant that appears to have a place for love does not genuinely allow for love to enter into ethics. For love has been reduced to simply a means for the performance of duty. The worth of love comes from its utility that furthers the obedience to the law. Ethically, love has no inherent goodness. As a means for the performance of the law, love is not informative of the law, which remains wholly rational. Moreover, as Rinne himself admits, "even in the context of the 'nice' Kant presented here, the feeling

---

[93] *Ibid.*, 133.
[94] Cf. *Groundwork*, 4: 398.

of love can never be the objective foundation of morality. The foundation is pure practical reason and respect for the moral law."[95] Though Rinne has said much in his attempt to provide a place to love in Kant's ethics, love's importance remains minimal, since it does not serve in any capacity as the basis for the law, which is what is here at issue. Goodness is not grounded in love. Kant never appeals, and given the structure of his ethics, can never appeal to love as a moral ground. Love also is not permitted to be disclosive of the law, which is known through pure practical reason alone. For love is an affect, but affects are, as has been already discussed, completely blind. One could also ask whether a love for the law, a cheerful heart for the law, is really love at all. A person cannot give herself to the law, for the law, as empty in itself, can never respond. She does not love the abstract, formal law, but the consequences of good action, the particular goods of the world, those persons who are supported by moral deeds. A person loves the things and others of the world, the things that she enjoys and is close to; duty, following the law as an end, does not admit of love. In stark contrast to Kant's position, one could argue that the law is pointless without the beings for which it is conducive, since without these beings, there would be no content or application of the law that would in such case remain purely formal. Such law would be utterly irrelevant did it not somehow relate to concrete beings, implying that really what is loved are those beings. In the final account, for Kant, love neither reveals nor grounds the law. Consequently, whatever room Kant may have given love in his ethics is as a mere means for the performance of duty, leading to the conclusion that love occurs in his ethics only because persons happen to be entities who do love, and he relates love to the moral law not as an equal partner to the law but as

---

[95] *Ibid.*, 3.

subject to the law. To say that love is part of his ethics, then, is only true in the sense that love, as part of the person who is obligated by the moral law, must too be placed under the demands of the law but without regard to the content of love. Love's place in the ethical is restricted to the rank of subject, not ruler.

Therefore, the warm Kant still fails to grant any sort of priority to affectivity; what is relevant is that affectivity, including love, is still entirely separated from the source of normativity in the moral law. Love does not cross the divide between freedom and nature; it remains wholly on the side of nature, unable to formulate ethical responsibilities. The divide between nature and freedom remains as strict as ever, a divide in which being and goodness are radically divorced, a divide in which the whole affective life of the heart belongs to existence alone—a heart and existence stripped of all inherent goodness, a goodness emptied of all content and relevance. This divide, as it turns out, more than a century after it was definitively established haunts the two greatest attempts to develop a phenomenological ethics. These ethics, insofar as they are subject to the divide between being and goodness, are thus subject to all of the implications of such a divide that I have laid out here, the irrelevance and emptiness of goodness and ethics and the worthlessness and barrenness of being and life. These implications make founding a coherent ethics problematic, when such an ethics does not take into account the situations, persons, and things of the world for its measure, seeking a measure beyond the world and therein implying that the world is unable to out of itself serve as informative for how a person is to live her life. In facing these difficulties, phenomenological ethics is left in a precarious position that inhibits its receptivity to the fullness of lived experience. Developing phenomenological ethics so that it might be

open to the fullness of concrete daily life and existence, from the clues that it itself begins

to provide, with an awareness of its problematic predisposition to Deep Kantianism, is

the task of the rest of this study. Through being aware of Deep Kantianism while also

working out the profound insights of phenomenological ethics in conversation with one

another to establish a unified whole, I hope to ground a synthesis of what is best in

phenomenological ethics on a new basis.

Chapter Two
The Elevation of Affectivity and the Revelation of Value: Scheler's Ethical Deep Kantianism

Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values stands as the founding text

of the tradition of phenomenological ethics.[96] In it, Max Scheler suggests that the source

of the ethical is located in the rank and order of values that are revealed by affectivity.

According to Manfred Frings, "*Formalism* is a first attempt to put the discipline of ethics

on a phenomenological footing."[97] Unlike his contemporaries Edmund Husserl or Paul

Natorp, who were mostly concerned with "intellectual activity, Scheler focused on the

emotional life."[98] The employment of the terms 'value' and 'affectivity' already suggests

a significant conceptual break with the ethics of Immanuel Kant, who is thus not

accidentally Scheler's primary interlocutor in *Formalism*. More than this, *Formalism* is

written as a direct reply to Kantian ethics; Scheler states that in this text, "I wish to take

this opportunity to set forth some criticisms of formalism in ethics in general—especially

of Kant's arguments in support of it—so that I can clear the way for my work."[99] The

first task that *Formalism* must carry out is the critique of Kant's formal ethics that places

the source of the ethical solely in the domain of a priori formal laws of freedom and

reason. This opposition to Kant is widely recognized; Jere Paul Surber writes that "the

explicit target here [in *Formalism*] is Kant," and Rodolphe Gasche has pointed out that

---

[96] Perhaps also why Scheler is arguably most remembered for *Formalism*, rather than for any of his other significant contributions, is that this was the first systematic attempt in phenomenology to develop an ethics on a large scale, and one that certainly succeeded in capturing the minds of others within phenomenology who were attuned to ethical questioning. As such, *Formalism* is unique within phenomenology, a tradition that has not prioritized ethics—an oddity as I have suggested in the introduction as the result that phenomenology, given its interest in life, would seem to be inherently ethical.

[97] Frings 2001, 22.

[98] Vacek 1982, 156.

[99] *Formalism*, 5. This is a reference not only to Scheler's work in *Formalism*, but also to a "major work planned for the near future" (5), one that, however, never materialized. Thus *Formalism* remains Scheler's primary ethical project, supplemented by texts such as *Ordo Amoris* and *The Nature of Sympathy*.

Formalism "proposed one of the most sever critiques of Kantian ethics."[100] Only after

having adequately responded to Kant can Scheler develop his own ethical views,

implying that these views emerge from a fundamental confrontation with Kant.

Though Scheler elevates affectivity and critiques Kant's formal ethics, he

remains, as I will argue in this chapter, much more determined by and close to Kant than

he lets on. Contrary to the claim of Thomas Owens, that "Scheler's theory of ethics is

opposed to Kantian ethics on every major point," there are significant agreements

between Kant's and Scheler's ethics.[101] Their relationship is not one of mere opposition,

but a relationship in which Scheler adopts Kant's most basic assumptions while

attempting to articulate a new, non-formal emotive ethics. Scheler successfully opposes

Kant's hostility to affectivity by demonstrating how affectivity is revelatory of the

ethical, the first clue to overcoming Deep Kantianism, which I discuss in the first part of

this chapter; however, this clue is undermined by Scheler's directing of affectivity not to

real objects, things, or persons of the world but rather to values as separate from the

bearers of value, as I will elaborate in the second part of this chapter. This is the result of

Scheler's fundamental agreement with Kant that still places the ethical in the *a priori*. In

the words of Philip Blosser, Scheler "accepts the Kantian critique of consequentialist

theories, conceding that ethics cannot be rigorously grounded in anything as uncertain as

the anticipated realization of contingent, empirical goods or ends."[102] Consequentialist

should be taken in its broadest sense here to refer to any ethics that inheres in the

contingent and particular goods of the world, goods that as constantly changing are not a

---

[100] Surber 1992, 227; Gasche 2010, 115.
[101] Owens 1966, 144.
[102] Blosser 1987, 139.

stable foundation for the always binding standards of morality. In this sense, for Scheler

consequentialism would include virtue ethics alongside utilitarianism. In the third and

final part of this chapter, I will address the question of the mode of existence of values,

and whether their possible functional existence stand as a counterargument to my reading

of Scheler on value. If functional existence does not succeed as a counterargument, Deep

Kantianism returns in the form of the divide between bearers of value and values, being

and goodness, corresponding to the divide between nature and freedom.

The Elevation of Affectivity

With Scheler, for arguably the first time in the history of philosophy, affectivity is

recognized as revelatory of the ethical, granting it priority in investigations regarding the

character and sources of normativity. Affectivity and the ethical are not accidentally

related; their bond is so deep that without affectivity persons would not even be able to

encounter the ethical. This priority of affectivity requires an anthropology that

acknowledges the affective as a distinct sphere that cannot be reduced either to the

rational mind or to the physical body in stark opposition to one another. Scheler writes

that "[s]ince its introduction by the Greeks, the term *reason*, or *ratio*—especially when

placed in opposition to so-called sensibility—has always designated only the logical side

of spirit, not the *non-logical a priori* side."[103] From its Greek origins, philosophy has

understood the person in terms of a dichotomy between immaterial reason and material

sensibility. That is, the person is divided into body and soul, where the body is wholly

physical, functioning as the source of all sensation, appetite, and affect that are

---

[103] *Formalism*, 63-64.

accordingly reduced to the status of being themselves merely material. In opposition, the

soul, the immaterial dimension of the person, is defined by reason or calculative thinking,

the ability to move from premises to conclusions. The soul is entirely constituted by its

rationality. Whatever is not rational, belongs to materiality and the body. The soul is

reason alone. Arguing against this assumption, Scheler states "[o]nly with the final

dismissal of the ancient prejudice that the human spirit is *exhausted* in the contraposition

of 'reason' and 'sensibility,' or that everything must be subordinated to the former *or* the

latter, is the structuration of an *a priori non-formal ethics* made possible."[104] There exists

an aspect of the person that is not physical but also does not belong to the rational mind.

Calculative thought does not exclusively characterize the immaterial domain of the

person. There is more to the soul than mere reason.

Beyond reason and sensibility, there is a third characteristic that constitutes the

human being. This third is the

> emotive elements of spirit, such as feeling, preferring, loving, hating, and willing,
> [possessing] original a priori contents which are not borrowed from 'thinking,'
> and which ethics must show to be independent of logic. There is an a priori *ordre
> du coeur*, or *logique du coeur*, as Blaise Pascal aptly calls it.[105]

By his reference to Pascal, Scheler makes clear that the third is the heart. The affective

world, as Scheler writes in *Ordo Amoris*, is composed of the "movement of my heart."[106]

In addition to the rational mind and the physical body, there is the feeling heart that is of

the utmost importance. Scheler maintains that "heart deserves to be called the core of

man as a spiritual being much more than knowing and willing do."[107] The affective

---

[104] *Ibid*., 64.
[105] *Ibid*., 63.
[106] *Ordo Amoris*, 98.
[107] *Ibid*., 100.

domain of the heart is constitutive of the person as such, without which the person would not be at all. Spirit, before it is rationality, is heart. The non-material, the spiritual aspect of the person is fundamentally a space of feeling, loving, and desiring. Love makes a person who she is, comprises her, gives to her that she is this person, whose identity is always already grounded in such love. For "[w]however has the *ordo amoris* of a man has the man himself."[108] A person simply is his heart. The order and structure of his love, the things that he loves in certain ways and loves more than others, manifest him as he really is. How a person's loves, desires, and feelings are ordered is indicative of who the person is as such, meaning that they are constitutive of the person.[109]

The feelings of the heart, as Scheler's examples in *Formalism* manifest, go beyond physical feelings in the body, of pain, hunger, or thirst, and extend to those affects that are not experienced physically. The feelings of love or hate are qualitatively different than those of hunger or thirst. In love itself, I do not experience a bodily sensation, but a felt relation of care for, service to, and well-wishing for another person, and in hate itself, I feel a repulsion toward, rejection of, and ill-wishing for another person. Desire, joy, sorrow, and fear, to name some of the principle affections, are not described by the physical. For they do not pertain to a part or even the whole of the body, not referring to the satisfaction of hunger in the stomach, thirst in the throat, or tiredness in the whole of the body. They refer to a unique relation to something outside of me as other than myself, as a this person, thing, or event, in its very being as this person, thing, or event that is not simply the rumbling of my stomach. Physical feelings

---

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] The significance of love in particular as the chief affect of the heart and person will be developed in the next chapter.

might result from these in my body; I can be hot in my flesh with hatred or with love. The love or hate that one feels interiorly, insofar as they are felt, do not belong to the mind even in their interior status. Love rather than being a rational thought that occurs in the mind is something that comes upon the self in its interior life. What is encountered in love is not logical, is not constituted by calculation or deductive reasoning. The mind as rational is active, deliberately directing itself from one concept to another of its own accord. The axioms and propositions of logic do not in any way characterize the feeling of love, or, for that matter, of any other feelings. The self finds itself loving or hating, receptive to and moved by these feelings that occur in the heart. Love, feeling, is passive and thus not under one's control, in contrast to reason. The heart denotes this realm of what is passively felt in a domain distinct from that of the body and that of the mind, distinct from body as interior and from mind as felt.

As separate from logic and materiality, the heart has its own proper order and standard that is not founded in the rules of right reason or material nature. According to Scheler, "[f]eeling, preferring and rejecting, loving and hating, which belong to the totality of spirit, possess their own a priori contents independent of inductive experience and pure laws of thought," and "the *phenomenology of emotive life* [is] completely independent of logic, having an autonomous area of objects and research."[110] One could call this area, as does Pascal, a logic, in the sense other than that of formal logic or measurement. There is an inherent structure and organization belonging to the heart that in its being directed and joined to its objects in a specific way constitutes the structure of the heart, the *ordo amoris*. Love need not and in fact cannot be ordered by the laws of

---

[110] *Formalism* 65, 64.

reason, which would be a foreign imposition on love that fails to take the native tendencies of love into account. Such native tendencies of love, as having their own intrinsic order, can thus by implication be disordered too. Therefore, "any sort of rightness or falseness and perversity in my life and activity are determined by whether there is an objectively correct order of these stirrings of my love and hate, my inclination and disinclination."[111] Perversity or evil and rightness or good are determined by the movements of the heart, the fundamental orientation that the heart has taken with respect to the objects of its love. These movements, though not determined by reason, still have a fundamental objectivity. Objectivity here can be understood as referring to the relation to the object. The person does not herself determine what constitutes the proper order of love, which, though in her, extends beyond her in its own structure of which the person is a part and to which she is thus subject. Her standing with regard to this structure determines whether she is good or evil. There is a fundamentally ethical implication of the heart. According to Scheler in the Preface to the Second Edition of *The Nature of Sympathy*, he "in his *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, has again adopted Pascal's old but splendid idea of an *ordre du coeur*, *logique du coeur*, *raison du coeur*, and made it a pillar of his ethical system."[112] The center of Scheler's ethics rests in the order of the heart, in an investigation of the orientation of love toward its appropriate objects. The orientation of love in particular and the heart in general holds the greatest significance for ethics, suggesting that ethics is to be founded elsewhere than in reason, which does not provide the standard for right and wrong.

---

[111] *Ordo Amoris*, 98.
[112] *The Nature of Sympathy*, xlv.

Scheler explicitly seeks to establish the priority of the heart in the ethical in response to Kant. He states, "Kant therefore has no grounds for his assumption that any utilization of 'feeling,' 'loving,' 'hating,' etc., in the sense of basic moral acts is an *erroneous deviation* of ethics toward 'empiricism' or the 'sensible,' or a false basis in the 'nature of man' for the cognition of good and evil."[113] Since Scheler has demonstrated that affectivity does not belong to the domain of the sensible, Kant's claim that ethics cannot be grounded in the affective as a part of the physical world no longer applies. Once established that the affective cannot be reduced to the body, that the affective extends beyond the world of nature, the way is cleared for the possibility that the affective could be a source of normativity. For if the affective is not merely physical, subject to change and particularity, it might have structures that are in fact universal and necessary, thereby possessing the requisite necessity to serve as the foundations for the ethical. That is, affectivity contains an a priori structure. Scheler argues that "contrary to Kant, we recognize an *emotive apriorism* as a definite necessity."[114] Affectivity, as belonging to the spiritual side of the person and not emerging from the body, has, alongside the mind, its own a priori organization. There is an innate structure to the heart before all experience. In Scheler's own words,

> *axioms of values* are wholly independent of logical axioms and are not mere 'applications' of the latter to values. Logic and a *pure doctrine of values* stand *side by side*. Though Kant wavers on these questions, he becomes all the more firm in his position that all feelings, even love and hate, basically belong to the 'sensible' sphere; he excludes them from ethics because he cannot assign them to 'reason.'[115]

---

[113] *Formalism*, 65.
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *Ibid.*, 64.

There are axioms, self-evident principles that are not based in anything else, of values, of ethics, that are in no way connected to the axioms of logic. The axioms of reason are fundamentally unable to inform those of ethics, since reason does not provides insights about how one is actually supposed to live. The axioms of reason, such as identity, A = A, non-contradiction, ~(A & ~A), or modus ponens, P, P $\rightarrow$ Q, therefore Q, say nothing about how one is to relate to others or conduct one's own life. They are rules of rational knowledge that proceed to deduce conclusions from previously established premises or assumed first principles. A = A signifies the logical identity of a mental object or concept with itself as necessary for the process of deduction, without reference to the existential unity or difference of actually existing beings. Even if operating under the presupposition that somehow the rules of logic are inherent to and originate out of necessity in the mind, these logical axioms would still remain internal to the operations of the mind, thus lacking existential and ethical import. Ontological affairs and situations are not necessarily reflected by logical axioms that, as governing rational cognition, are limited to ruling the mind alone. The standards of rational knowledge are only applicable to atomic logical concepts that can be ordered accordingly. Logic, as providing a measure of the validity of rationality, will only guarantee the validity of the concepts of reason without providing for the goodness of acts.

To expect that logic should be able to provide the sources of normativity ignores the limitations of the applicability of rational principles. Non-contradiction, modus tollens, modus ponens, material implication, or addition are merely formal laws for determining validity, how a rational argument can formally proceed from premises to conclusions without consideration of the content of the argument. However, as formal,

these are empty without content; the rules of reasoning require something about which to reason, which cannot come from reason as purely formal. The content that would govern the ethical life would have to come from elsewhere even for reason to be applied to this content, indicating that the source of normativity must be given outside of reason. The fundamental axioms of ethics will be given, received by the self from a place other than reason. Even were reason to be then applied to these original norms that might function as the axioms of ethics, as the given premises from which all subsequent ethical conclusions are deduced, these premises must first be understood on their own terms, along with all that they entail not as logical propositions but as ethical imperatives. Knowledge of ethics depends upon the content itself of ethics, not on the knowledge that one might happen to have of ethics and then try to subject to the measure of rational cognition. This demands an analysis of the primordial ethical given as such, and not as derived from rationality.

Despite this, Kant does attempt to reduce the ethical to the rational. Scheler states that for Kant, "[w]illing appears merely as an area of application for logic, not as having a lawfulness of the same originality as that of thinking."[116] The Categorical Imperative in its first formulation, "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law," that stands at the center of Kant's ethics is in a way an application of the principle of non-contradiction to the will.[117] For the maxim, the principle of volition or that which informs one's choice, is to be universalizable. That is, it should be able to be willed everywhere without contradiction.

---

[116] *Ibid.*

[117] *Groundwork*, 4: 421. This is not to say that the Categorical Imperative is only and nothing more than an application of the principle of non-contradiction, but that it is in a way an instantiation or development of non-contradiction.

Non-contradiction, $\sim(A \& \sim A)$, is applied in that one is to avoid violating it when one acts. An action that comes into contradiction with itself cannot be willed consistently, so that the will becomes opposed to itself by willing an act that entails willing the contradictory of this act, which consequently destroys the principle of the will. Such principle by violating non-contradiction in entailing contradictory actions thereby ceases to exist. Though the will does still exist, its principle has utterly collapsed in its contradictory character. Reason is thus for Kant partially providing the fundamentals of his ethics, where the will can be subsumed under non-contradiction, which in a way becomes the form of the will.

Yet in Scheler's words, Kant "(falsely) conceived the principles of identity and contradiction as norms of our judgments (and willing)."[118] For as Scheler observes, the Categorical Imperative is entirely empty. It represents what he calls "Kant's terrifying sublime formula, with its *emptiness*."[119] Acting so that the will never contradicts itself in its principle cannot indicate proper ethical behavior; for which particular maxims a person should actually adopt remains undetermined. As empty of all content, the Categorical Imperative cannot hope to inform the difficult and complex concrete choices that must be made in the course of daily ethical life. The content, what I should really do, is absent. "I must act with charity toward others," "I must eat three meals a day," "I must go to bed at seven o'clock," or "I must play chess with someone every day at school," are all becoming increasingly more trivial and arbitrary, but all of them can be willed without contradiction. Which of these maxims, then, should a person adopt, especially if they begin to conflict with one another? What if going to bed at seven o'clock forces me to

---

[118] *Formalism*, 85.
[119] *Ibid*., 6. Emphasis mine.

neglect my friend who needs help studying for an exam? Even if one were to restrict

these examples to more clearly ethical situations, "I must be courageous," "I must hold

the door," "I must feed my family," or "I must feed the homeless," the maxim or maxims

to be adopted are not given. One might have enough food for one's spouse and children,

but not enough for the homeless; even if one were to attempt to arbitrate between these,

the universality of the Categorical Imperative fails to indicate which course of action

should be adopted. Both, formally speaking, pass the test of the Categorical Imperative

in that they are not at all self-contradictory. Even in passing the test, however, they are in

no way founded in the Categorical Imperative. To make morality contingent on the

Categorical Imperative fails to give it any content. Outside of Kant, there are at least

fairly convincing arguments that letting one's family starve for the sake of the homeless

would be unethical. If one pushes on the non-contradictory character of the Categorical

Imperative even further, the maxim "I must make myself great" does not seem to carry

within it any contradiction—for one could conceivably make oneself great without

actively harming the exaltation of others. Everyone could equally make themselves

great. After all, would not making myself great be a way to respect the personality in me,

as commanded by the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative? Yet, this

maxim contains a reprehensible egoism. Non-contradiction misses the mark, as would

any other rational principle or rule, in being a source of normativity.

Even if one takes the Categorical Imperative in its most basic sense as simply a

test that the principle of choice must pass through if such principle is to be ethical, so that

any principle that fails would be excluded from the domain of the ethical, as the last

example I gave suggested, morally reprehensible principles can pass the test of the

Categorical Imperative. And, if the content of the law is not actually established by the Categorical Imperative, is the Categorical Imperative really what determines the good or right?

Any possible axiomatic system of logical deductions from premises will thus fail to be ethically relevant. Reason simply cannot be the source of normativity. The ethical is qualitatively distinct from the logical, since ethics is at its core about how a person lives her life, how she is to act and behave, and why she should act and behave in a certain way. Ethics does, then, have a fundamental character of choice, of freedom, as Kant observes; but as freedom, ethics assumes the possibility to choose certain actions that constitute or lead to certain ways of life. In being concerned with life, ethics is concerned with movement, with something that can progress or regress, become better or worse, good or evil. The ethical is oriented toward the motion that guides and impels persons through the time of life—desire, or love, where a person as choosing a certain way of life is inherently involved in living with others and among things, to which the person responds. As moving and responsive, life is affective or passionate. A person is affected by the world, by her friends, by her desires. As a living being, in encountering a world through affectivity, the person becomes ethical. Logic, the rules of calculative thought, requires static, atomic concepts that can be defined and circumscribed according to the axioms of reason, and most significantly are completely subject to the activity of reason, which seeks to posit in a totality whatever ends up as its subject matter according to its logical rules. Reason constructs objects that may, as founded in reason, be thus governed by reason. The self actively establishes a territory for its own domination; it is the lord of its concepts and deductions. But ethics, as referring to a life of movement and

81

passion, necessitates a response to the calls of life, requiring axioms that provide demands for how one is to live. The ethical mandates a willingness to not be in control, to not rule, to be subject and open to others. A knowing being, were it to exist with the powers of reason alone, would not be a person and would not even live at all. For there would be no response to what affects it, what moves it; it would be entirely static, a self-contained calculator of logical propositions and arguments that would not be open to the world.

Jean-Luc Marion, in his investigation of love, of the heart, in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, writes that "to give up on even the possibility that someone loves me would be like operating a transcendental castration upon myself, and would bring me down to the rank of an artificial intelligence, a mechanical calculator or a demon."[120] Without love, without the heart, a person would be a purely logical mind, which would only possess certain, deductive knowledge of the objects that it has posited for itself. Yet this would be nothing more than at best an idle representation of the world, a copy of the world with no purpose, because there are no motives in logic, and at worst an artificial distortion of the world in the image of the logical computer itself. For the real world will have never reached the calculator, who can only interact with the world as reduced to an object for the powers of logical calculation and deduction. The world cannot affect a being that lacks receptivity, that lacks affectivity, that lacks a heart. To live, to be a person, requires that one has a heart, that one can be open to the world and others, through which life as movement and desire is possible at all.

---

[120] Marion 2007, 20.

Most significantly, as Marion observes, there is nothing meaningful to an artificial intelligence, which would be forever confronted by "the black sun of vanity," the question of "'What's the use?'"[121] An existence without the heart is empty, devoid of all significance, goodness, pleasure, joy, and love. This is the consequence of the good being encountered as the object of love or desire, as an end that one seeks. But as an end, the good is sought; it inspires movement. If an entity is wholly caught up in its rational deductions, it will never find meaningfulness. Deductions are not inherently aimed at the achievement of any good. One does not prove meaning through argument; I cannot make something appear as meaningful through proofs of pure reason. That something is meaningful, good, or joyous, that it matters, to either myself or to others, is simply experienced as given. I feel something as meaningful, which moves me, and perhaps might even make me reason about it. The givenness of meaningfulness and goodness indicates the passive reception that I have of them. Without my having any say in it, I am attached to an object because it was given to me by someone dear, a person who, as dear, I did not choose as meaningful. I encountered this person simply as meaningful and good. Goodness, the desirability and worth of something, its ability to give pleasure, comes upon me.

All of the logical deductions that a pure rationality could ever muster would never attain to meaningfulness and goodness. Thus, without the heart, one would be confronted by sheer vanity, unable to justify her actions—assuming that she could act at all. Scheler argues in *Formalism* that "[a] spirit limited to perception and thinking would be

---

[121] *Ibid*., 28.

absolutely blind to values."[122] The heart is the condition for the possibility of ethics. Without affectivity, there would be no ethics, since the goods and joys of life appear in heartfelt experience. Joy is encountered, not as something rational, but as a distinct given that comes upon me. I cannot reason myself to feeling joy. How I can respond to the world, things, and persons with whom I dwell, how I can encounter them as meaningful and worthy of my love, requires affectivity. Passion, being moved by others, how others appear to me, is the foundation of ethics. An ethics must take into account the affective heart. According to Frings, by his analysis of affectivity, "Scheler was…able to put to rest the groundless assumption, long held in the history of philosophy, that feelings are nothing but bundles of chaos to be reined by reason and ordered by logic."[123] To try to govern the heart by reason is a confusion of terms, when the heart, as the place of being affected by what is beyond myself, is a passive openness that makes room to heed the demands of others. *Formalism* is thus at its core an attempt to rewrite *The Critique of Practical Reason* in the language of the heart rather than of reason, a heart that is directed toward values.[124]

---

[122] *Formalism*, 68. This passage also clearly gestures toward the question of whether mere empirical sensation can be the source of normativity; I have not addressed this possibility here since historically, the possibility that reason is the foundation for the ethical has been emphasized almost to the exclusion of the alternative possibility that sensation could take up for itself such a role. Plato, Aquinas, and Kant, and to an extent Aristotle, have all presupposed that reason must be the basis for ethics, dismissing out of hand the role of sensation. Even the Epicureans arguably do not turn to sensation alone, since their pleasures also are pleasures of the heart, of the affective life. Sensation alone as the source of ethics has not been a popular thesis; but, it still stands as a possibility that should at least be addressed. In brief, one should not appeal to sensation alone because the flesh, the domain of sensation, though it might have an intentional relation to its objects, such as hunger is aimed at food and exhaustion at sleep, is not genuinely open to the Other as other. For sensation alone, as I will discuss in Levinas' analysis of the affectivity of the self in Chapter Four, is the movement of an enjoyment that is nourished by the conversion of the Other into the same. Sensation is not open to alterity, but returns back to itself, an egoism. This is only overcome by the heart, which is primordially receptive to the approach of the Other, to the extent that the heart can permeate the flesh, a flesh that is thereby offered up to the Other herself. This would thus be no longer an ethics of the flesh but of the heart.
[123] Frings 2001, 95.
[124] That is, Scheler's most significant contribution to ethics is his discovery of the priority of the heart in its disclosive character that is opposed to Kant's ungrounded presuppositions against affectivity. Philip

Affectivity and Values, or the Return of Deep Kantianism

This heart for values is thus its own distinct domain in which affections reveal through an intentional relation the axiomatic structure of the heart. That is, affections are aimed at values that constitute the axioms of the heart. These values as contents and not merely formal comprise a material a priori. Scheler writes that "values are *clearly feelable phenomena*—not obscure X's which have meaning only through other well-known phenomena."[125] Access to values is possible precisely through feeling, through the heart that reveals values in themselves, not mediated by other things or qualities. In this felt relationship "with world (be it psychic, physical, or whatever), in preferring and rejecting, in loving and hating, i.e., in the course of performing such intentional functions and acts…values and their order flash before us."[126] Values are encountered through affective intentionality, in which feelings have an intentional structure with respect to their objects. The objects of feelings such as love and preferring are values themselves. Affectivity is aimed at value. In having established this aim toward value, according to Andrew Tallon, Scheler is one the great advocates "for the intentionality of affectivity."[127] As intentionally directed, Scheler maintains that the "functions and acts

---

Blosser has clearly articulated those main presuppositions that Scheler challenges in *Formalism*, when in *Scheler's Critique of Kant's Ethics* he writes that "Scheler's most important and effective criticisms of Kant center on three points: (1) the latter's acquiescence in a metaphysical tradition that led to his proposed bifurcation of reason/sensibility, will/inclination, form/matter, and noumenon/phenomenon; (2) his presupposition that whatever order we discover in the world of desire, inclination, and moral experience can be nothing other than an order imposed practically by the law-giving rational subject; and (3) his formalistic conception of reason, moral law, and duty" (Blosser 1995, 171). On these points, as Blosser has observed, Scheler is entirely correct to resist the denigration of feeling that is propounded by Kantian ethics.

[125] Frings, 16.
[126] *Ibid.*, 68.
[127] Tallon 1996, 246.

[of affectivity] supply the only possible *access* to the world of values."[128] Values are

encountered solely through feelings, without which value would not be experienced at all.

In showing that reason and sensation are inadequate as the foundation for morality,

Scheler turns to intentional feeling as disclosing the sources of normativity. Feeling as

intentional is fundamentally a value-response, responding to the demands and

characteristics given by values. The possibility of feeling is the possibility of being

affected by values, which leave a mark upon the person who encounters them. As such,

values are not reducible to feelings. In Scheler's own words, "values are *true objects* and

are different from all *states* of feeling."[129] Values are not themselves feelings, but stand

outside of feelings as the objects thereof. They possess their own independent status as

independent objects, meaning that they are not internal to the person. Just as chairs are

objects of physical sensation, values are objects of feeling. Similar to perception, feeling

is intuition. According to *Formalism*, a "value itself always must be *intuitively given* or

must refer back to that kind of givenness."[130] Scheler is an emotive intuitionist, holding

that the ethical becomes available through intuition rather than reason.[131] The standards

of behavior are intuited through affectivity, presented in themselves to the person. These

intuitions are of value. The ethical arises precisely in the felt response to a value.

       In their independence, these values constitute a material a priori; as not objects of

reason but affection, they are more than merely formal. Rejecting Kant's identification

---

[128] *Formalism,* 68.

[129] *Ibid*., 19.

[130] *Ibid*., 14-15

[131] Scheler is distinguished from similar, contemporary accounts of the ethical articulated by the emotive intuitionists of the analytic tradition by firstly his method, which as phenomenological proceeds from the givens of daily experience that are the intentional objects of feeling, in the case of ethics, a method that in no way appeals to concepts of self-evidence; and secondly, his grounding ethics as a result of this phenomenological method in a hierarchy of values that is itself revealed by the structure of feeling. That is, in Scheler's view, feeling is itself objective.

of the a priori with the formal, Scheler argues that there is a different a priori.[132] There is

an a priori that has determinate content that is defined by values. Whereas for Kant all

that is a priori must be formal, for Scheler, there is a specific a priori that is material,

having particular content. These contents are constituted by an inherent arrangement of

values. Scheler writes that "[t]he most important and most fundamental a priori relations

obtain as an order of ranks among the systems of qualities of non-formal values which we

call value-modalities. They constitute the non-formal a priori proper in the intuition of

values."[133] A priori contents are comprised by values, and in particular include ethical

values. There is a whole domain of contents that has its foundations before all

experience; though such contents might be given in felt intuition, this feeling only stands

as a mode of access to what is already independently established. Much like how the

physical world exists without any one individual person's sensible intuition thereof, the

world of values exists without a person feeling a particular value.

Among these values, there is a hierarchy of four ranks, beginning with the lowest

values of the agreeable and disagreeable and progressing to the rank of vital feeling, then

to the rank of spiritual values, and finally to the rank of the highest values of the holy and

the unholy. The first rank of the agreeable and disagreeable is related to "*sensible feeling*

(with its modes of enjoying and suffering)."[134] In the feelings of the body, agreeable and

disagreeable sensations occur that reveal these values. The value of bodily pleasure and

pain belongs to this rank of values. Pleasure is encountered as being the place of a proper

value that is in response desired by persons, who are right to seek it, while they also

---

[132] *Formalism*, 64.
[133] *Ibid.*, 104-105.
[134] *Ibid.*, 105.

avoid the disvalues of pain. These values of the body as sensible are at the bottom of the

valuative hierarchy, a datum given by sensible feeling.

The next rank of values are those of "vital feeling," which are primarily

concerned with "feelings of life (e. g., the feelings of 'quickening' and 'declining' life,

the feelings of health and illness)."[135] There are values that pertain to the person as a

living being, who feels vital values. These values are those of the growth and uplifting of

the lived body in its health and continued existence. What promotes life participates in

vital values. The corresponding disvalues are those of the degradation and harm to the

lived body. These values and disvalues are revealed through feelings of, for instance,

health and strength as such, not as pleasurable in themselves but as sustaining life. The

value is having a healthy body, whereas in the values of the agreeable the value consists

in the feeling of pleasure itself.

Higher than even these vital values are "*spiritual values*," having "a peculiar

detachment from and independence of the spheres of the lived body and the

environment."[136] Whereas the things that participate in vital values are related to the

conditions of the physical world, what fully participates in spiritual values is not

intrinsically connected to the world of nature. In particular, spiritual values include those

of the "'*beautiful*' and '*ugly*,' together with the whole range of purely aesthetic values;

the values of '*right*' and '*wrong*'…the ultimate phenomenal basis of the idea of the

objective order of right…[and] the values of the '*pure cognition of truth*.'"[137] One can

see here the old transcendentals of the beautiful, the good, and the true converted into the

---

[135] *Ibid*, 106-107.
[136] *Ibid*., 107.
[137] *Ibid*., 107-108.

language of values. Scheler has defined these in terms of having the character of value. Goodness, beauty, and truth are at their core values that are spiritual since they do not exist as or bear a relation to the things of the physical world. They simply are as values, which can be borne by or shown in materiality through things that participate in them, but are not any of these things. They are experienced through feelings of "spiritual joy and sorrow" that reveal, for example, the goodness that is their intentional object.[138] Great joy, not in the advancement of life or the satisfaction of pleasure, but in the good or beautiful themselves, indicates these values.

The final category of values is that of "the *holy* and the *unholy*," referring to the intuition of "absolute objects" revealed by "feeling-states [that] indicate the 'nearness' or the 'remoteness' of the divine in experience."[139] Values of the holy as absolute do not have a basis in other values, and thus stand above even aesthetic and moral values of the domain of spiritual values. The holy admits of no further definition or explanation in its place at the summit of the value hierarchy. Whatever is best and purest in the person refers to these values of the divine, an openness to what entirely transcends the world. One feels adoration for what is immeasurably superior to oneself. The feelings that one experiences in response to the holy show how close the person has come to the holy, or if one has removed oneself from the holy by adopting the disvalue of the unholy. In the final account, "the act through which we originally apprehend the value of the holy is an act of a specific kind of love…that is to say, in essence the act is directed toward persons," an act that culminates in "a 'value of the person.'"[140] The greatest heights of

---

[138] *Ibid*., 108
[139] *Ibid*., 108-109.
[140] *Ibid*., 109.

value as the holy are the source of the worth of persons, both human and divine. Scheler maintains that love is in its fullest sense aimed at personal beings who participate in the value of the holy; persons become participants in the holy through being a place for the value of holiness to manifest itself.[141] The centrality of the person and her worth revealed by love itself will be the topic of the following chapter.

The rank of values that is participated in by entities is fundamentally distinct from and independent of the entities that might manifest particular values. In Scheler's own words, "the *value* of an object is already very clearly and evidentially given *apart from* the givenness of the *bearer* of the value."[142] Values are distinguished from their bearers; though they might be given alongside particular things in the world, they are not these things themselves. They are encountered as separate from things. There are thus two categories, of concrete things in the world or "bearers" and of ethical values that these things may participate in. This distinction implies that values do not depend on the particular ontological affairs of their bearers. That is, "neither the experience of values nor the degree of the adequation and the evidence…depends in any way on the experience of the bearer of the values."[143] Particular bearers, despite the possibility that they might participate in value, do not themselves supply values. Bearers in themselves

---

[141] The fourfold hierarchy of value that Scheler establishes could itself already be problematized in its structure; for instance, the distinction between vital and sensible values seems to break down. For if the feelings of pleasure and pain, of the agreeable and disagreeable, all depend on the ontological uplifting or upsetting of the body in its existence, then they are purely derivative. The pleasure of eating emerges precisely from the nutrition received, from the satisfaction of a need, without which there would be no pleasure. Pleasure indicates that the need for food has been satisfied. Similarly, the distinction between vital values and spiritual values is questionable insofar as there does not seem to be anything purely good, any pure goodness (or beauty), but this being that is itself good or beautiful, as this being. Goodness is in the very existence of something, which, if it is a person, might be both vital and spiritual, yet these refer to the concrete being of this person, uniting both spheres, rather than separating them. Though these considerations should be further developed, they are not quite immediately relevant to the question of Scheler's Deep Kantianism, and thus remain as a whole beyond the scope of this work.
[142] *Formalism*, 17.
[143] *Ibid.*

are value-neutral, only gaining value content by their relation to the values that they do not inherently include. Values in finding their place in concrete existence in bearers neither become these bearers nor inhere therein. In other words, the "order [of values] is independent of the form of being into which values enter."[144] Since values do not inhere in their bearers, they similarly do not emerge from the structures of existence. Specific beings might by participating in value manifest such value and bring it into their existence, but such value *qua* value in no way depends upon beings for its value. Values have a rank that is not determined by the order of what is. That which is cannot found value. An entity of the world might change, but the value itself of such entity does not. For example, "[t]he value of friendship is not affected if my friend turns out to be a false friend and betrays me."[145] Values persist without regard for whatever ontological situations in which they become manifest. This indicates "the extent to which values are, in their *being*, *independent* of their bearer clearly reveals itself."[146] The emphasis that Scheler himself places in this passage on *being* and *independent* is telling. The particular mode of existence and organizational structure that belongs to value is not grounded in the concrete things of the world. According to *Formalism*, "all norms, imperatives, demands, etc.—if they are not to be understood as arbitrary orders—have their foundation in an autonomous being, the *being of values*."[147] Values have their own independent mode of being that is not the same as that mode of being that characterizes things. Their existence differs from that of singular entities. That is, values stand in a domain that is divorced from that of being; whatever rules the structure of being provides

[144] *Ibid.*
[145] *Ibid.*, 19.
[146] *Ibid.*, 18.
[147] *Ibid.*, 186-187.

91

do not inform the rules of value, which has its own unique structure that belongs to it alone. The ethical does not have its foundation in the ontological.

Scheler is thus repeating in the divide between the bearer of value and value itself the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness, that is established by Kant. Scheler's ethics, like Kant's, rejects the possibility of taking its cue from the ontological. The source of normativity cannot be given by the ontological, since beings and being are as such barren of value. The worth of things becomes once again derivative. Ought can never be provided through the is. Scheler writes, "[w]henever we speak of an ought, the comprehension of a *value* must have occurred."[148] The ought that tells one what deed one ought to do assumes a value that motivates the ought. A person ought to do something at all precisely because of the value of such act. Though Scheler in the context of this passage is arguing against Kant's founding morality in the imperatives of an ought, that an ought is itself rooted in value indicates that value, despite having a wider extension than an ought, remains separate from the world. Scheler makes the claim that "*every ought has its foundation in a value*" a "principle."[149] For values "are *independent phenomena* that are comprehended independent of the peculiarity of contents, as well as of the being-real or the being-ideal and the non-being…of their bearers."[150] Later in *Formalism*, even more forcefully, Scheler maintains that "[v]alues cannot be created or destroyed. They exist independent of the organization of all beings endowed with spirit."[151] The immutability of value especially emphasizes its complete divorce from being, which is of a changing order that contains entities in constant flux.

---

[148] *Ibid*., 184.
[149] *Ibid*.
[150] *Ibid*., 185.
[151] *Ibid*., 261.

Whereas the things of the world come to be and pass away, values remain. Whatever rank that values now possess will continue to be possessed eternally. Even if bearers might periodically manifest certain values over others, this in no way for Scheler suggests that value themselves change or are inherently connected to bearers. On the whole, Scheler is rejecting all attempts to "resolve values somehow into mere 'degrees of being.'"[152] The order and structure of being is in no way ethically revelatory; being does not and cannot inform the person how she should live.

The separation of values from any ontological foundations in the world is a constant refrain throughout both *Formalism* and Scheler's other ethical writings such as *Ordo Amoris* and *The Nature of Sympathy*. In *Ordo Amoris*, Scheler states that "[e]ssential and constant laws of rank and preference exist only in relation to those value-qualities and their modalities which have been separated from their contingent, actual bearers."[153] To be organized in the way that is proper to them, values must be separated from bearers. The entity that bears a value in no way establishes or grounds a value as a value. The very nature of value assumes that it is from the beginning distinct from the structure of being that pertains to bearers. An especially informative passage from *The Nature of Sympathy* maintains that "[t]here is nothing essentially or even exclusively social about the moral phenomenon; it would remain standing even if society collapsed, and is by no means a product of our relation to others."[154] The passage continues:

> the notion of an objective hierarchy of values, central to the whole of theoretical ethics, can be elaborated without regard for the facts of the situation between 'self and neighbor' or 'individual and community;' being valid for man as such, it holds equally for the isolated individual and for the community.[155]

---

[152] *Ibid.*, 263.
[153] *Ordo Amoris*, 123.
[154] *The Nature of Sympathy*, 72.
[155] *Ibid.*

This is an explicit denial of the position that the source of normativity is to be found in the ontological relation between the self and other. The ontological, or the actually existing, concrete relation of daily life between the self and the other is not adequate to serve as the ground of ethics. How I exist with others in lived situations and affairs is in itself not ethical. Ethics belongs to values that have their own structure and domain that is not derived from the concrete relation between self and other. Even what constitutes perhaps the most important existential core of a person's being, her relation to those others with whom she dwells, is not for Scheler disclosive of or the basis for ethics. Being for the other, serving the other, is not valuable as an ontological comportment toward the other. Scheler's rejection of even the relation to the other person as the source of ethics exemplifies the distance that he has put between values and existents.

Yet one must ask, what is the value of the ethical without the other? Scheler assumes without argument that morality remains even if one is alone, mentioning explicitly the instance of a societal collapse. However, this absence of the other presupposes the primordial relation to the other in the first place, without whom no ethics would be possible. For if I was ontologically entirely alone in a world that lacked any and all others, the claims of ethics seem as if they would not obtain; how I chose to live my life would be irrelevant, as there would be no consequences for others as the result of my actions. No one would be harmed or benefited by my deeds. Moreover, the worth and purpose of acting seems to be absent if one is not acting for someone. A life lived entirely alone would not qualify as a life at all, filled with the monotony of hearing oneself think to and act for oneself, without the voice or touch of an other. Even if granted that one can exist without the other, itself a questionable proposition, that this life

94

would be ethical is doubtful. For ethics, being about my actions and dispositions with respect to the world, assumes that there is a purpose that informs these actions and moves me to live in a certain way. However, a being who exists only in itself, that does not recognize the demands of any other being of equal or greater rank, would have free reign to do whatever it pleases in the world of things. These things as things would be entirely subject to its will and whims, able to be dominated by the completely isolated being that would be blind to values. For these values cannot be grounded in the experience of a solipsistic being that as solipsistic would be solely concerned with itself. Values would prove to be empty to a being that existed with its own private world to dominate. Only by the approach of an other, who calls the self into question, could such a self even begin to be open to something as abstract as value—as suggested by Levinas, a suggestion that will be adopted later in this work.

Were one to take up the examples of humility, charity, health, and wisdom, their value utterly vanishes if not grounded in the concrete person and her relation to other concrete persons. Humility matters because in it one is open to the other through the acknowledgment of my insufficiency, presupposing the ontological character of not being self-sufficient, of nothingness. It has worth through opening one to the other, and it is approved of in general when in others as a virtue since from its ontological origins it allows a person to genuinely see herself in her nothingness and to approach the other as not subject to herself. A person is able to be rooted in her status as a being who requires the other, and must thus turn from humility toward the other. Charity, similarly, the love for the sake of the other, arises from being for this particular other herself, not as a value, but simply in her being as herself. Charity assumes the ontological relation in which one

encounters a concrete other person as *this other person herself* in life. Without this

relation, charity is meaningless. Beyond moral and thematically interpersonal virtues but

still within the domain of values, health is good precisely because it is the well-being, the

sustenance in existence, of this singular person. Health is the proper constitution of the

flesh, a particular ontological state. Wisdom, if taken in the most broad sense as

regarding the appropriate uses and limits of one's knowledge, refers to the possession, the

existence, of certain knowledge in a person, who is considered wise when this knowledge

is used for the achievement of some other good. In having wisdom, a person knows the

relations, structure, and ground of things, a relation to something exterior to her own self.

Wisdom would consist in the recognition of knowledge as for others, not merely for

one's own enrichment, but so that one can better serve the good of others, again being

grounded in concrete existence. Humility, charity, health, and wisdom, along with any

other values, are meaningful precisely insofar as they occur in the character of this person

in how she dwells in the world. They are this ontological constitution itself, which is

desirable and valued because it is this ontological and existential constitution and not

another such constitution.

The need to separate values from their bearers arises for Scheler precisely because

even in his opposition to Kant, he yet assumes the same presuppositions that lead Kant to

locate the source of normativity in a realm entirely distinct from that of nature and

existence. In *Formalism*, Scheler agrees with Kant when the latter "correctly and

pointedly stressed in his proposition…*no philosophical theory of values* (be it ethics,

aesthetics, etc.) *may presuppose goods, much less things*."[156] Kant "correctly tried to set

---

[156] *Formalism*, 23.

aside actual goods in laying the foundations of ethics."[157] Scheler holds that "[g]oods

are, according to their essence, things of value."[158] Goods are the things that exist in the

world that participate in value. Things become goods precisely because they share in

value. Existing goods, such as this wealth, this flourishing, this friend, this act of service,

are not the source of ethics. In themselves, they are not sufficient to found the ethical,

which must be a priori since only the a priori is necessary and universal. For once again,

Scheler stands with Kant in holding to the view that if ethics were to be based in goods, it

"could have only empirical and inductive validity. We are confronted at once with the

relativism of ethics."[159] An ethics of goods would not be able to escape the charge of

relativism, in that all of its objects as particular existing entities that are goods would be

changing, while the rules of ethics are to obtain in all cases. Scheler continues: "[i]f the

moral value of our will were dependent on the latter [goods], it would also be affected by

these destructions. Thus it would also be dependent on the accidents of the actual course

of causality of things and events. But this, as Kant correctly saw, is patent *nonsense*."[160]

The Kantian prejudice against the changing things of the world is entirely adopted by

Scheler, who is content to, without investigation, assume with Kant that changing things

bear nothing unchangeable in their ontological structure. As Philip Blosser observed,

"Scheler essentially agrees with the Kantian insistence that the foundations of ethics must

be unconditional and a priori, that morals cannot rest on anything as unpredictable as the

anticipated realization of contingent goods or ends," and "Scheler begins his evaluation

of [the] Kantian position by conceding Kant's major thesis: all ethics based on the

---

[157] *Ibid*., 11.
[158] *Ibid*., 9.
[159] *Ibid*.,10.
[160] *Ibid*.

anticipated realized of particular 'goods'…must be rejected as insufficient."[161] Accordingly, Scheler has sole recourse to an appeal to abstract values that do not have their basis in the structure of things. Scheler must necessarily posit values when he continues the ancient metaphysical bias against mutability, maintaining that things subject to change are not able to provide any certain, stable foundation, for moral or other claims. Through and beyond things, Scheler must seek some character or tendency that manifests itself in the entities of the world but is ultimately entirely independent of these particular entities. This tendency is value. Value is the unchanging standard that informs the ethical, revealed by feelings that rather than being aimed at the ontological states of existing things are aimed at values separate from things.

Consequently, I argue that Scheler's intentional affectivity is problematic since though Scheler rightly sees it as revelatory of the ethical, he directs affectivity away from the concrete things toward values as independent of things. He places the source of normativity, like Kant, outside of the things of nature. Once again, nature and being are not ethically indicative. The good is located elsewhere than being in exchange for the purity of an utterly different order. Yet this would empty value of all content, stripping it of its relevance and turning it into a foreign imposition upon life. The heart becomes isolated from the world in not being aimed at the world, splitting the person between ethically oriented affectivity and ontologically oriented perception and cognition. The person for Scheler is divided alongside with the division between bearers of values and values. Value therefore repeats the divorce between nature and freedom.

---

[161] Blosser 1995, 7, 62.

Values and Functional Existence

        If values separate the is from the ought, and themselves remain distinct from what is, then this would suggest a certain ontology of values, a mode of existence, or at least the lack thereof, for values. Yet, Scheler has done little to clarify the question of where values are located, meaning that, in the words of Philip Blosser, "the chief defect of Scheler's phenomenology, like all philosophies of value, was the weakness of its treatment of the *ontology* of values."[162] The most notable attempt to provide an account of the ontology of value in Scheler has been offered by Manfred Frings in his commentary on the philosophy of Scheler, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, where he has argued that values possess functional existence. In this functional existence, values gain real existence by coming into relation with their bearers, they retain a close bond with their bearers rather than a separation.[163] Frings writes, "values do not exist unless they coexist with entities, just as colors do on a surface. A value must, therefore, enter into a function with a proper substrate, person, or state of affairs."[164] In this reading, values in terms of their actual being depend upon coming into relation with concrete things for such being. Values do not exist except by being incarnate in a particular person or thing. They come to be when realized in particular entities. This is "functional existence," which occurs "whenever this something must enter into a function with something else for it to become extant."[165] Values exist through incarnation in the things that participate

---

[162] Blosser 1995, 16.
[163] Peter Spader in his *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* has also supported the model of functional existence for values, though he does not advance the argument for functional existence beyond Scheler, preferring to cite Scheler at length with little commentary (Spader 2002, 68-71). At the same time, Spader still suggests that there is a fundamental sense in which values are "autonomous" and "independent" from their bearers (Spader 2002, 71, 69).
[164] Frings 2001, 62.
[165] *Ibid*., 24.

in values, rather than forming some sort of Platonic heaven. Just as a color "does not exist unless it is spread out on a surface," value only exists when intertwined with things.[166] Similarly, the color green might exist on a surface but it does not inhere in such surface, since "on certain conditions" the "surface will also turn red or any other color."[167] There is a spectrum, an order, of colors that obtains independently of whether any of these colors are actually visible on a given surface, analogous to the hierarchy of values that obtains independently of whether any of these values have actually been brought into existence in particular bearers. Surfaces nonetheless participate in colors that always color a surface, while bearers always participate in values that always show themselves in bearers. There are no surfaces without colors and colors, though having their own structure, only become real when they enter into functional existence with surfaces. There are likewise no things without values and values, though having their own structure, only become real when they enter into their own functional existence with things. This seems to paint a much gentler picture than the one that I have provided here so far that separates values from their bearers. For if values only exist as such when in things, there seems to be no divide between things and values. Values are intertwined with existence, which together form a unity rather than a dichotomy. They are simply the aspect of entities insofar as these appeal to the heart of the person. This would constitute a sort of Aristotelian reading of Schelerian values that would, somewhat analogously to Aristotle's essences, explain values as always incarnate in the things of the world; there is no abstract, Platonic value or form. Just as Aristotle rejected the forms and articulated essence as only existing within material things, Scheler rejects abstract value, which

---

[166] *Ibid.*
[167] *Ibid.*

exists as functionalized, as intertwined with the particular things of value. Would Scheler not, then, succeed in overcoming the divide between nature and freedom?

Firstly, what is most significant is not the question of real existence; even if values do only gain their actual existence if they come into a functional relation with their bearers, Scheler has already established that they remain independent of their bearers in their structure. A value is more valuable than another because it ranks higher than the latter in the value hierarchy, not because of the relation between the things that bear them in the world. Values remain in a rank that is radically independent of their bearers, which in no way inform this rank. The structure of is not at all grounded in the things of concrete existence. Whichever mode of being that values possess is simply not that of entities. It belongs to values alone. In terms of the analogy with color, green and red are distinct colors apart from the particular surfaces that they are might be spread upon. This consideration begins to break down the analogy with color; for whether I prefer something depends on it being this thing, and not another. I care about it not because of its color, but because of its surface. Ultimately, this implies that the gradation of color— of which colors I prefer—is grounded in the surface, the beings, of the world. I very much like bright red or blue ties, but I certainly would not want to have a room painted bright red or blue. The color, or value, that I prefer, depends upon the ontological considerations of the entity or situation in question. Things take on colors precisely through their own way of interacting with light; the ontological status of the thing will reflect a certain color. There is no color on a thing without the qualities of the thing, and ultimately, color depends upon the energy of the light striking the thing, a relation between one ontological existent and another ontological existent. Pushed to its limits,

the color analogy reinforces my charge against Scheler in that colors remain of the same existing order as do things. Colors are able to be spread on things by the interactions between light and the thing; without this ontological connection between existents that are of the same order—photons, particles, striking atoms, also particles—there would be no color. There would be no good without the relation between self and other, between concrete persons existing in an ontological order that is so structured that they must serve and live for one another.

If what I am calling the Aristotelian reading of values is granted, so that values, like colors, enter into actual existence by being functionally realized in conjunction with things, so that value has an ontological status with that of the world, even this Aristotelian reading does not free Scheler from the grasp of Deep Kantianism. For even if values do gain real existence through a sort of actualization, they in their independent order that is not determined by such existence remains the standard of behavior, action, and love, and so outside of the things of the world. Even if things are always actually endowed with values, if these values are anything besides the thing, if they are of their own order, then they are still divorced from things. For concrete daily ethical life shows that supposed values are inextricably connected to things, such that no distinction is possible. I prefer a pen because it is given to me by a dear friend, and I love this person because she is this singular person, and no other. One eats for sustenance and health so that she can continue to be, while she wishes to be so that she can serve the other in love. Value cannot, even conceptually, be differentiated from the entities that are valuable without becoming a vacuous figment; these entities, simply as themselves are desired and sought after, are good, in their existence as such. Any employment of value that

maintains an order independent of value would divorce itself from concrete, particular beings that are ethically significant in their very singularity. This employment of value, though, haunts Scheler, who remains subject to the dichotomy of being and goodness established by Deep Kantianism. By appealing to value, Scheler seems to have chosen a fundamentally deontological approach to ethics. An appeal to value is much like an appeal to law, an appeal to some standard from beyond the world that demands the compliance of duty.

Yet, there seems to be a way out of this difficulty for Scheler that has already been hinted at previously in this chapter; after all, the highest values refer through love to the person as such, suggesting that there is an ontological character that in the final account belongs to value as personal. The person as a loving being is the center of all meaning, existence, and value for Scheler; does he not thereby escape the charge that he divorces values from real existence? Does he not in so doing provide another clue for the overcoming of Deep Kantianism? Whether he does provide a clue through his emphasis on the value of the person who is constituted by love, and if so, whether it too remains haunted by the long arm of Deep Kantianism, is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Three
Person, Love, Value: Scheler's Pathological Deep Kantianism

In the previous chapter, the importance of the person as a loving being for Max

Scheler has already been hinted at, for whom the values of the person stand at the

pinnacle of the hierarchy of value. The person turns out, alongside the concept of value,

to occupy the central place of Scheler's ethics. The person becomes the pole around

which all meaning, worth, and reality orbit through love, which by opening the person to

values distinguishes her from material things and objects. That is, Scheler's ethics orbits

around the three terms of value, person, and love. This personalistic love is the second

clue that Scheler provides for overcoming Deep Kantianism. Only by a recognition of

the person as constituted by love can the divide between nature and freedom be

overcome, for love, as moving the self beyond itself, would seem to perhaps reveal the

necessity of receptivity to the demands of the other. However, this clue remains

determined by Kant; for Scheler, love of the person turns out to have a subsidiary

relationship to value that ultimately deprives her of intrinsic worth. As Manfred Frings

notes, for Scheler the "existence of the person [is] as the bearer of values."[168] This

implies that the person is secondary to values, which are given first place over the person.

Consequently, against John Crosby's interpretation that Scheler successfully rejects

"extrinsic accounts of personal individuation in favor of an intrinsic one" through

locating the principle of individuation in a "unique personal essence," I argue that this

personal essence as a value-essence remains extrinsic to the being of the person. [169]

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two sections; the first expounds Scheler's notion

---

[168] Frings 2001, 66. This is of course not a difficulty for Frings who agrees with Scheler's anthropology
and ethics, but this does to me seem to be problem on the bases that I will set forth in this chapter.
[169] Crosby 1998, 31, 32.

of the constitution of the person in love and the resulting priority of love, and the second seeks to show how this notion is contaminated by the Deep Kantianism present in value. Even the person as loving, the center of Scheler's ethics and thinking as a whole, remains subject to value.

The Constitution of the Person by Love

Already, Scheler's statement discussed in the previous chapter that the act of love through which one apprehends the value of the holy "is directed toward persons, or toward something of the *form of a personal being*" points to the significance of the person.[170] The highest values are concerned with the person, suggesting that the person is the being that has the greatest worth, that perhaps the person is the center of all meaning and existence. Scheler continues this line of thought, writing that "all possible values are 'founded' in the *value of an infinitely personified spirit* and its correlative '*world of values.*'"[171] The whole hierarchy of values is organized around the value of a personal spirit that as infinitely personified could perhaps be called the maximum person, or the most personal of all beings. Personality thus constitutes the core of the rank of values, and is the basis for all other values. Value seems to emerge from personality, without which they would not be at all. Personality is the condition for the possibility of value. *Formalism* states that the

> being of the spiritual *individuality* of the person [is] the bearer of moral value. For us, the value of the person is the highest value-level, and it is superior to all those kinds of values whose bearers are willing, actions, and properties of the person, just as it is superior to all values of things and feeling-states.[172]

---

[170] *Formalism*, 109.
[171] *Ibid.*, 96.
[172] *Ibid.*, 508.

Moral value has a place in the world when it is borne by the individuality of the person, who is different from objects, things, and entities inasmuch as she bears distinct values. The individuality of the person suggests that she is a unique, singular, irreplaceable being who cannot simply be exchanged for another. Before turning to how the person becomes a person, the conditions of her possibility, I will first discuss Scheler's definition itself of the person.

As already mentioned, Scheler begins by differentiating the person from all things. According to *Formalism*, "the person is not a thing; nor does the person possess the nature of thingness."[173] There are two distinct categories into which entities can be classified, one of persons, and another of things.[174] This distinction becomes clarified when Scheler states that as "a concrete unity of all possible acts, the person is *outside* the entire sphere of all possible '*objects*'…the person is, above all, outside the entire sphere of thingness, which is a part of the sphere of objects. The person exists solely in the pursuance of his acts."[175] Persons are acting beings, as opposed to things that as objects do not fundamentally act. A person is defined as a person for Scheler insofar as she is the origin of her acts that moves from herself. In contrast, an object simply is perceived in all of its various manifest ways, subject to being encountered, manipulated, and experienced by something else. One encounters an object in its various qualities that by

---

[173] *Formalism*, 29.
[174] One would be correct to notice in this distinction between persons and things by Scheler a closeness to Kant; though a direct textual link seems to not be provided by Scheler, given his familiarity with Kant, that Kant was in the background is likely. I would go so far as to suggest that another way that Deep Kantianism is present in Scheler is in his conception of the person as an act-center, since as an act-center, the person is acting from herself; she is autonomous, beginning in a way with herself. This seems to be analogous to Kant's conception of the person that defines the person as autonomy. Both Scheler and Kant understand the person in terms of activity, of her own ability to do as she wills, prioritizing act over passivity and passion. Scheler's anthropology remains too close to Kant. Yet, as Levinas so brilliantly shows in his ethics, the person is primordially passive, an insight that I will discuss in Chapter Five below.
[175] *Formalism,* 29.

manifesting themselves allow for the object to be known as a whole. In contrast, the meaning of a person as acting being outside of the domain of objects indicates that one does not encounter a person as merely another object. For the act that a person performs does not appear as an object. The effects of an action upon the things of the world are observed, but the act itself is not. For the act requires an intention, a purpose, an independent origin, none of which are given in the act itself as occurring physically.

In *The Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler expands on this concept when he states that "[t]he (spiritual) person, as such, is intrinsically incapable of being *treated as an object*, for its mode of being is only accessible by virtue of *participation* (or reproduction) in thought, volition, or feeling, just as an act is."[176] To be a person at all involves thinking, willing, and feeling, which are equally necessary for an act as well. Acts are the product of thinking, willing, and feeling; yet the emotions, choices, and thoughts of another are in no way given by the act as an object. An act as witnessed does not in itself provide these interior tendencies of the heart, which are not simply given as are the parts of a thing. A thing is given in its entirety, in all of its parts, and can be extensively exhausted by observation. As an object, it stands against the self, as ob-ject, where it is the being to which perception is directed. The object is in standing against and thereby being comprehended by perception. Yet no matter how much one observes acts, these will remain fundamentally mysterious to the observer if he remains only an observer of disjointed, isolated acts. He must engage with the one who acts, listen to the one who acts, to discover the intentions behind the acts that are intrinsic to the act, since without these intentions there would not be an act. Consequently, "personality is, in effect, a non-

---

[176] *The Nature of Sympathy*, 224.

spatio-temporal collocation of acts, a concrete whole conditioning each individual act, and a whole whose variations are reflected in those acts."[177] A person is encountered not as an object but as an act-center, as the one comprised by the manifold acts that she variously performs during her life. As a thinking, willing, feeling being, she is given through her acts that manifest her as a whole. Her mode of being is distinct from things in that it is constituted as an unobservable intertwining of different acts that emerge from the interior choices, thoughts, and feelings that a person has. In Frings' words, "person is self-executory existence."[178] As an acting being who acts according to her own interior motives, she exists in determining herself through these acts that are the result of her will and affections. Her unity as a single being stands precisely in being this act-center that brings together as their source but also as comprised by actions.

This unity of the person is ultimately for Scheler constituted "by *individual-personal value-essence*."[179] There is a particular value-essence, a particular value as such, that belongs to the person and makes her the individual being that she is. This use of essence should not be confused with the old metaphysical theories of a universal essence that is shared by all individuals who thus make up the members of a species through participation in the general essence. For according to Scheler, "there are essences that are given only in one particular individual."[180] Essence can be particular, and in fact singular, occurring only in one being that is different than all others. In Scheler's view, what makes a being a person is its having a value-essence that is not repeatable, an essence that appears only once in all of history, constituting this particular

---

[177] *Ibid.*
[178] Frings 2001, 66.
[179] *Formalism*, 489.
[180] *Ibid.*

being. To be a person is to be this being that has its own completely unique essence that is instantiated in this being alone, shared with no other entity. By her unique essence, the person herself becomes a unique being. She is her very own value-essence. Scheler remarks, "[h]ence all *ultimate* bearers of moral value, to the degree that they are conceived as *pure* persons, are *different and unequal* not only in their being but also in their value."[181] Consequently, "in terms of the moral 'ideal' *each person must comport himself as ethically different and different in value from every other person under otherwise similar organizational, psychic, and exterior circumstances*."[182] Each person, possessing her own singular value essence, is different than every other person, despite all being still persons. To be a person is precisely to be radically unique, to be the sole instantiation of one's essence. Every person is other than an other person, indicating that being a person means to be constituted by something entirely private and separate from all others.

What is common to persons, what allows persons to all be called persons, is the lack of anything common to persons. Each person does not share what constitutes her with anyone else, an other who is like the first person only in the sense that this other also does not share the first person's constitutive and unique essence. The person is constituted by that which is occurs only for and in her, making her the being that she is.[183] For if one is truly unique, then one must be other than others, containing a

---

[181] *Ibid*., 509.

[182] *Ibid*.

[183] This is precisely why Scheler states that each person is different in value; what he means is that each person, as constituted by a unique value-essence, must confront her own unique moral vocation, where she must realize her value-essence in her life. This moral vocation belongs to no one besides herself. In other words, there are particular responsibilities and values that she must enact that someone else might not have to enact. A very basic example is in being a parent. As a parent, she must care for and raise her children. At the surface level, this seems to be shared by many other parents, who are also obligated to care for their children. However, what is relevant for Scheler is that not only is a person a parent, but she is the parent of

109

fundamental characteristic that is never seen elsewhere than in this one being. If no aspect of the person belonged to her alone, but was shared, even with a single other, then she would no longer be unique, she would no longer be a one-what, a thisness. For she would be that quality that is common between her and that being, which as common would indicate that they are not other than one another, but the same. To be unique mandates that a person be constituted by a thisness that is other than others. Scheler is one of the first, by insisting on the uniqueness and difference of the value of persons, to systematically set forth one of the fundamental insights of personalism, the particularity of this person as this person, against all universalisms that would threaten to subsume the person into an abstract whole. Personalism arrays itself against the tradition of universalism in ethics since this universalism would ignore the singularity and unique of this person and the moral calling that she alone must confront. This insight of personalism will in some form be carried forward by Dietrich von Hildebrand, Martin Buber, and Gabriel Marcel, both in and beyond the terms of value. To be unique is to be other, for there to be an alterity at the core of the person; every person is other than every other person. That is, as individual, a person is this person, this being here who as being this singular entity is the only entity of its kind. Each person is irreducibly unique, allowing for her to bear the highest value.

---

this child. Only she is responsible for this child, her child, and if she attempts to flee this moral vocation to this one child, she would fail the moral calling of her life. Each person must care for in her moral vocation these others, and not other others. No person has the exact same moral vocation, as seen in that every person, despite the fact that there is a common world between her and an other, still has an entirely unique place in this world that is not identical to the place of any other. This moral vocation is both objective and subjective; the different value-essences that constitute each unique person are only hers, and thus subjective, applying to no one else, while also being objective in that since each person is constituted by her singular essence, she cannot change what this value-essence calls her to do.

Scheler argues that "[w]hat mediates the intuition of the person's ideal and *individual value-essence* is, first of all, the understanding of his most central source, which is itself mediated through *love* of the person."[184] Value-essence, the thisness of this person for Scheler, is encountered by love, operating in a central role in the constitution of the person, who exists through the movement of love, implying the question of the condition for the possibility of, the ground for, the person.

This movement of love is possible through an openness to alterity. The person as a unified acting being assumes that one can consciously make a choice motivated by feeling. Even though Scheler is similar to Kant by emphasizing the person as an acting being, Scheler understands the identity of an acting being in terms of feeling and affectivity, beginning to depart from Kant. A person in acting is acting upon something, presupposing that the person is able to encounter something through being affected in conscious thought and to respond by will to this thing. She is open to the thing as itself, as a distinct thing. Action assumes an openness. According to the following passage from *Ordo Amoris*, "love was always the primal act by which a being, without ceasing to be this one delimited being, abandons itself, in order to share and participate in another being as an *ens intentionale*."[185] Love moves a being outside of itself in an intentional relationship. It orients one to another, allowing for a being to transcend itself in a motion tending toward the other. Scheler writes, "[i]f a man loves a thing or a value, such as the value of knowledge, if he loves this or that formation of nature, if he loves a man as a friend or as anything else, in every case this means that he emerges from his merely

---

[184] *Formalism*, 488.
[185] *Ordo Amoris*, 110.

bodily unity and stands forth in his central unity as a person."[186] Love is what makes a

person a person; it is the condition for the possibility of personality. Rather than

elevating the empty freedom of autonomy as did Kant, Scheler finds the person in the act

of loving another, of going beyond itself by approaching an other on the terms of the

other. For as an intentional act, love tends toward what is external to the person, so that

through a motion of exteriorization, the person becomes herself. The person is

constituted by her relation to the other. If external things did not exist, if there was no

world to encounter, then there would be nothing for the person to love, and no way for

the person to be in the first place. One must be open to things if she is to think about,

choose, or feel them. Therefore, "[m]an, before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volens*, is

an *ens amans*."[187] Love is what opens the person to the world, to allowing her to think or

to will. Without love, she would never be able to move outside of herself so that she

would have something to think or will about. She is primordially a loving being. Love is

the fundamental feeling of the person, more fundamental than any other affection.

This openness of love that directs the person beyond herself distinguishes her

from things or animals; as Scheler has already made clear, the person is uniquely an

acting being, unlike things, but the status of an acting being assumes love as the basis of

acts. Before all acts, one must love and be open to what and who is other. This further

separates the person from animals and not only things. As a loving being, the person

surpasses the animal, which operates according only to its material needs in which the

animal acts for and supports itself. In the movement of the organism, the animal does not

tend toward anything else as other than itself. The otherness of what is other than the

---

[186] *Ibid*., 109-110.
[187] *Ibid*., 110-111.

112

animal does not appear for the animal. To love precisely means to encounter someone's needs, fears, desires, and being on the terms of that other person, rather than in one's own terms. Love demands that one tend away from oneself without return, a tending that is wholly foreign to the order of the animal. Consequently, love in its fullest instantiation for Scheler ultimately occurs within and between persons, specifically human and also for him divine persons.

The importance of love reinforces and deepens the necessity of affectivity for ethics that was discussed in the previous chapter. Without a love that impelled one to desire to have knowledge of this thing, or to love this knowledge over that knowledge, thinking and willing would be impossible. Before one can think, one must have a desire to think; before one can will, one must have a desire for this over that. All thinking and willing assume a love that moves them. A person chooses to think about on the basis of love for that something. No one would seek to know, and thus would have knowledge, without a love to know that which one seeks. All rules of reasoning and logic assume a desire, a love, to know them and to use them, apart from which they would never be known in the first place. Kant misplaces ethics by placing reason and will as the practical application of reason since all reasoning and willing requires for its foundation a motivation to reason and to will. This motivation is love itself, the tendency that moves the self away from itself toward the things and others of the world. By moving toward things, the self can make a place in itself to encounter these things as other than itself. Life and existence begin with love, suggesting that ethics as involving how one acts in life with the entities of the world must also begin with love. An ethics worthy of the name must therefore not only give an adequate account of love, but also of how love is

the primordial ground for all action and lived existence. In Scheler's own words, "[w]e can have just this knowledge of the ranking of everything which is possibly worthy of love in things, in accordance with their inner values. Such knowledge is the central problem of all ethics."[188] The order intrinsic to and revealed by love stands as the foundation for the ethical task. Ethics must necessarily address love, the heart that moves life in its dispositions and comportment to the world. The heart in love is precisely what allows for life in the first place. Love is the condition for the possibility of ethics and personality, an insight that will prove central for overcoming the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness, of Deep Kantianism. Only through love can I be opened to and motivated with respect to exterior existence.

Insofar as the person is the height of value, this indicates that the person is the ground of all meaningfulness and worth. Scheler states that "[o]nly persons can (originally) be good or evil; everything else can be good or evil only *by reference to persons*, no matter how indirect this 'reference' may be."[189] The ethical significance of something comes down precisely to how it stands with respect to persons, who constitute the foundation for the ethical as such. Morality does not exist apart from personality. Things are good insofar as they are beneficial for persons and evil insofar as they are detrimental to persons. The beings of the world come to matter and gain worth through coming into relation with the person. For in a world of entirely closed off beings that interacted with one another through mechanical causality, in which an atom impacts another atom without being received in itself by such impacted atom, there would be no ethics. Each atom, completely separated from every other in itself, would never

---

[188] *Ibid.*, 99.
[189] *Ibid.*

114

encounter other atoms, but would only experience itself in its various changes that from its perspective—if 'perspective' could even be used here—are random internal modifications to its substance that simply happen without ground. It would change, certainly, in being subject to the impacts of other atoms, a change that would yet seem to be arbitrary modifications to itself, as it would never see an other. The changes would barely qualify as alterations, in that for the atom, it would never become other than itself, for to become other assumes that one is different from oneself, that one is here both now and also is cognizant of a past in which one was other than one is now. This atomic being existing in a pure in itself would not be affected by or passionate toward the other, since it is not passive before the other, which would require that it encounter the other as other. However, it only encounters itself as itself, locked in its own ipseity. There is no life or movement and consequently no heart or love for such a closed being. Ethics, then, requires a person, who as person is related by love to what is other than herself. She becomes ethical through having a life of the heart in which she genuinely encounters in love what transcends her as other than herself. This implies the tending away from oneself as the core of the person that Scheler identifies as love. Since whatever value things possess ranks lower than the value of the person, the person gains a preeminent standing among the beings of the world, having been endowed with the greatest value by love. Yet even this love, as I will seek to show in the next section, though moving the person outside of herself, retains the resonances of Deep Kantianism through its direction toward value. There turns out to be a tension between value and the priority of love.

The Tyranny of Value over Love and Person

Scheler's attempt to establish the priority of the love of the person turns out to be haunted by Deep Kantianism, because insofar as the person ultimately derives her value from the value itself that is distinct from the person, her value is not her own. Love is for value, not for the person. Just as for Kant the person receives all of her dignity from being capable of following the moral law, for Scheler the person receives all of her value from being the bearer of the highest value that is itself not the person. Though Scheler does say that "love and hatred" "refer to objects inasmuch and insofar as these possess value. It is never values we love, but always something that has value," this orientation of love to existing objects must be understood as passing through existents rather than stopping with them.[190] Love for Scheler is aimed at persons only insofar as they are the bearers of value, which is to say that love is for the sake of value, not the bearer. Hatred operates similarly, aimed only at the bearer with regard to the values or disvalues carried by such bearer. Love and hatred for Scheler function within an axiomatic structure of value that is distinct from any ontological structure. In *Formalism*, Scheler states that

> 1. The existence of a positive value is itself a positive value.
> 2. The non-existence of a positive value is itself a negative value.
> 3. The existence of a negative value is itself a negative value.
> 4. The non-existence of a negative value is itself a positive value.[191]

These axioms of value are informative for love and hatred; love is the correct response to positive value, while hatred is the correct response to a negative value. That is, one loves a positive value, and seeks to bring it into existence as much as possible, to further the bearers of positive value. In contrast, one is to hate a negative value, seeking to prevent it from being instantiated in bearers. Both love and hatred are proper feelings when they

---

[190] *The Nature of Sympathy*, 148.
[191] *Formalism*, 26.

respond to values and disvalues in the correct way. One ought to love a positive value, while one ought to hate a negative value, a disvalue. Love has primacy over hate, for Scheler, insofar as even if one were to rightly hate all disvalues, one would be left with a rather empty moral world. One might reject disvalues, but one needs more than the mere rejection of disvalue to live ethically; to prevent the enactment of the evil or unholy is not enough. For one would be left with nothing in having rejected disvalues. There would be neither holiness nor unholiness, neither good nor evil, if only the disvalues have been removed. Though the non-existence of a negative value is a positive value, this still would not entail the enactment of the holy or the good, but only the absence of the unholy or the evil. Thus, one must then turn to love, through which one might respond to and realize the existence of positive values such as those of the holy and the good. Hate is a proper response within the overall framework of love. Consequently, hate is subordinate to love for Scheler, for whom love is the originary affect that directs the person to values.

That is, love seeks after objects insofar as they possess or have value, a phrasing that suggests that love approaches things only on the condition that they are subject to value. They are loved because of something besides themselves. Scheler confirms this when he writes in *The Nature of Sympathy*, "love relates, in the first instance, to *what has value*, and to man only to the extent that he is endowed with value and capable of advancement in this respect."[192] Despite Scheler's great emphasis on love, his theory of love fails to successfully cross the boundary between being and goodness. For love, though admittedly aimed at this particular being, loves that being merely as a bearer for something else, for value; if the being were not a bearer of value, then it would not be the

---

[192] *The Nature of Sympathy*, 155.

recipient of love. This indicates that love for Scheler is directed ultimately at value.

Love tends toward value, not particular beings, since these beings can only be loved on

account of their participation in value. Things, and even persons, are not intrinsically

worthy of love for Scheler. The person is loved for the sake of her bearing values, rather

than for her own sake. Scheler goes so far as to claim that

> [t]hese acts [of feeling] and their laws can be investigated (by means of a
> phenomenological reduction), while entirely discounting the very existence of
> man as a being endowed with love or hatred, and oblivious of the empirical fact
> that many of these acts, as men actually perform them, do indeed concern other
> men.[193]

The ontological relation between self and other, as I have already noted in the previous

chapter, is not indicative of how one is to act. Values do not take the conditions of

existence into account. A value is valuable, on its own accord, apart from any

considerations of the bearers that participate in it. The value of value does not come from

the persons or the other who bear it. Bearers of value only have any value through their

permeability to and active participation in value, meaning that actually existing entities

lack intrinsic worth. They are not worthy in themselves by their own existence, but only

by the values in which they share. Value is raised above all things, depriving things and

even persons of their value. Though the person might bear the highest values, this

bearing of value confers worth on her only through the value in which she participates.

Scheler is emphatic that love is not grounded in loving an other person as such; he

writes "it is by no means a necessary condition for the occurrence of love and hatred, that

the act should be directed on someone else, or that there should be any consciousness of

human relationships."[194] This is because "the primary orientation of love is toward

---

[193] *Ibid.*
[194] *Ibid.*, 151.

values, and towards the objects discernible, through those values, as sustaining them; whence it is essentially a matter of indifference whether the values concerned belong to the self or to others."[195] This passage reinforces Scheler's conception of love as aimed at value; precisely in a recognition that love actively seeks after concrete things, he maintains that love only seeks these concrete things insofar as they are subject to values. Things mediate love. Though for love to occur might require existing things in the world, it approaches these insofar as it is concerned with that which transcends the things of the world, values. Things show forth value, what love is really going after. Love tends outside of the self in searching for value rather than for other concrete entities. Value *qua* value is what the person tends toward, so that her openness to the world depends on value itself. *Ordo Amoris* makes this clear: "Man is encased, as though in a shell, in the particular ranking of the simplest values and value-qualities which represent the objective side of his *ordo amoris*, values which have not yet been shaped into things and goods."[196] The whole world is organized for the person in terms of how it is valuatively encountered. What is, is not simply bare, but is filtered through values, so that the things of existence bear about themselves values. This is seen, for instance, from Scheler's perspective, when a person holds onto a gift from a dear friend who is now deceased. The person encounters this other friend as having value, whose value then extends to the thing that the friend gave as a present to the person. A pen would not simply be a pen, but would be a valuable pen on account of its connection to the value of the deceased friend. The rank of values as it is manifest in a particular person precedes the particular things and goods that might later be endowed as bearers of value. Only

---

[195] *Ibid.*
[196] *Ordo Amoris*, 100.

through these original values is the encounter with the world possible, without which there would be no experience. Values are prior to and above the things and others who constitute the person's daily life. Being encased by values shows just how far Scheler is taking the notion of value, so that all experience must first pass through the lens of value. Openness must first be openness to value; any openness to particular existents will be subsequent and derivative.

However, Scheler's placement of value in a domain external to bearers violates the fundamental presupposition of ethics, that ethics has to do with how one dwells in the world, how one lives with others and things, how one acts with respect to these others and things, and why one acts in a certain way. That is, ethics is about this person or this thing, about, for instance, acting charitably toward this person whom I love. I love this person as this person, not for the sake of the value in which she participates, but simply because she *is* this person herself in all of the richness of her concrete being. She in her very existence as herself is that which I love. I do not love her insofar as she participates in some value that would relegate my love to being for her as subject to value; I do not love value. Were I to love an other only on account of the value in which she shares, then I would not love her for her own sake. I would love her for the sake of value. This would, however, amount to a betrayal, in which I do not love her as herself, but as valuable. I would love her because of something else—value.

Even if one were to attempt to defend Scheler in what would amount to a Hildebrandian reading of value by emphasizing the personality of value, this personality turns out to be contingent on value. In *The Nature of Love*, Von Hildebrand writes that "in the case of love, the values in question and their delightfulness must be of such a kind

that they form a unity with the person as person, and that the person is fully thematic in them."[197] According to this account, value, in particular the highest value as such, what Von Hildebrand would call the important in itself, is unified with, rather than divorced from, the person. Moreover, the person becomes manifest and exemplified by this value itself qua person. Whatever it means to be a person is somehow present in this value. Von Hildebrand continues,

> Love in all its forms always involves this consciousness of the preciousness of the beloved person, and of a value datum so closely united with the person that the person stands before me as valuable, beautiful in himself, deriving all his attractive power and delightfulness from his preciousness and beauty.[198]

Love is thus directed toward the intrinsic preciousness of the person, not as an abstract value, but as inherently having beauty and what Von Hildebrand identifies as preciousness. This person is valuable in himself, by and through himself, without reference to an external quality such as independent value; values turn out, then, to simply be that domain in which the person is encountered as possessing innate worth and dignity.

Despite the apparent unity that Von Hildebrand is attempting to establish between value and person, there still remains a tension between these two terms. For "every love is a value-response," demanding that "for love a certain kind of value must be given, namely, a value which invests a human being as a whole with a certain splendor;" in slightly different terms, love "requires some givenness of value in order to arise. A person has to stand before me as precious and beautiful to be able to engender my love

---

[197] Von Hildebrand, *The Nature of Love*, 18. I would like to thank Alex Montes for our conversations that brought the differences between Von Hildebrand and Scheler to my attention.
[198] Ibid., 19.

for him."[199] Insofar as love is constituted as a response to value, the being that is the person must be invested, according to Von Hildebrand, with value, which then grants a splendor to the person as a whole. Moreover, value itself must be given in the person, a value even characterized as preciousness, as a condition for love. The language employed here suggests that the person must be encountered as—with the emphasis on the *as*—precious. Only if the person participates in the value preciousness is she valuable and thus able to elicit my love, which only exists at all on the basis that the being who I love has been invested with some value. That is, the value preciousness, or whatever term one wishes to use, remains prior to the person, who herself is still a mere participant in value. As much as Von Hildebrand rightfully wishes to ensure that the inherent worth of the person is not reducible to anything else, even the term 'preciousness' to me seems to run the risk of falling into a dangerous dualism. To prevent this dualism from occurring, one would need to define preciousness wholly in terms of the person. But, if so defined, then would preciousness really be a superior term to the ancient word, revitalized by Levinas as we will see in the following chapter, of the Good? The only purpose that would justify employing the term preciousness would be that it is in fact separate from the person, which brings one back to the dualism that should be avoided. The person to be herself and moving the self to love her needs no quality of preciousness or value. For if the person must be invested with value, then this value simply does not belong to her own self. It is not her own, standing in opposition to her as an extrinsic principle of valuation.

---

[199] Ibid., 19, 28.

Admittedly, in favor of Von Hildebrand's value ethics over that of Scheler's is Von Hildebrand's acknowledgment of the problem of the unity of values with their bearers; he at least, unlike Scheler, confronts this problem directly. Von Hildebrand certainly aspires to a value ethics in which value is itself intertwined with the person, which, if successful, would perhaps allow for value ethics to cross the gulf between nature and freedom, being and goodness, and thereby overcome Deep Kantianism. However, the unity of which Von Hildebrand speaks seems to be lacking; for after all, why is love simply not a person-response? If value itself is the person, understanding love in terms of value-response seems to be unnecessary. Only if somehow there remains a distinction between person and value—which is suggested by Von Hildebrand's use of the word 'invest' and Scheler's use of 'bearer'—does characterizing love as a value-response make any sense. If a person must be invested with value, if value itself must be given for me to love her, and the person herself in her existence is not what is given to inspire me to love her, then value in a way remains superior to the person, who is thus dominated by value. Value still remains prior to and independent of the unique person, even in Von Hildebrand's account of value and person. A person, even an infinite personal spirit such as God, bears the highest values because of value, not because of herself. If love only is through tending toward values, and the person only is through love, then the person only exists through value. Personality is subject to and defined by value, rather than value being interpreted in terms of the person.

Once again, Scheler follows Kant in granting the person dignity only on account of something extrinsic to the person that is ultimately impersonal; Kant calls this the moral law, while Scheler calls this extrinsic principle value. As existing as herself, in her

own thisness, the person is excluded from Scheler's ethics, despite its personalism, which remains compromised by a Deep Kantianism that makes the person conditioned by an extrinsic and impersonal standard. For even if the person is the entity that is understood as open to the law, her concrete ontological existence in daily life is still excluded from having any proper worth of its own accord. As a being in the world, the person remains on the side of nature. Her freedom for Kant or her value for Scheler is in no way reducible to or founded in the structure of her concrete existence. Whether one calls what constitutes a person the law or value, the person remains of derivative, secondary importance that depends upon value that is not herself. Against Crosby, who maintains that the person for Scheler is individuated by an intrinsic principle, I argue that insofar as Scheler subjects the person to value, she remains individuated by an extrinsic principle. Value, unless it is ontologically identical to the existence itself of the person, would remain distinct from and therefore alien to the person, who would not be individuated by her own being, her existential thisness itself.

Even Scheler's claim of an individual value-essence for each individual person does not rescue him from this objection.[200] For if the value-essence of a person is real and identical to the person, then it depends for its existence on whatever conditions allow

---

[200] If anything, identifying the person as a value-essence and maintaining that values have their fullest exemplification in value-essences would have the implications of answering the question of the ontological place of value for Scheler with a Platonism. For if each person is simply her value-essence, then this structure would be analogous to the unique form that constitutes each human soul as posited by Plato. Each form, and each value-essence, is separate from every other form and value-essence. But then, each form, and each value-essence, would exist separate from this world. For each form and each value-essence occurs only once in a non-repeatable instantiation, meaning that the form or value-essence does not exist as incarnate in the various things that participate in it. All forms (in the sense of the form of a human soul) and value-essences would thus exist as distinct from the things in which they participate. Scheler describing the person in terms of value-essence thus suggests a more Platonic rather than Aristotelian interpretation of value, where value does not exist only as incarnate in the things of the world—how essences exist for Aristotle; in contrast, value exists in its own value-essence, its own Platonic form, that is in no way dependent for its existence and character on however it might be instantiated in the world.

124

for the person to exist at all, turning this into an ontological inquiry that Scheler has

failed to provide; or if the value-essence of a person is real and part of the person or ideal,

then it is not identical to the person as a really existing being as a whole. In the latter

case, then once again, values remain extrinsic to the person, who will only have value

derivatively from the ideal or partial value-essence in which she as a bearer participates,

so that her worth does not belong to her. In the former case of real value-essence, the

value-essence as wholly real is reducible to concrete existence. But the person does not

have concrete existence in herself. Her existence depends upon an ontological ground

that is other than herself, from which she derives her being, and thus also from which she

derives her value-essence. Her value-essence would thus be fundamentally relational,

since the person herself would be relational in receiving her existence from an other.

Value would be relational, and existentially relational at that, being enmeshed in the

ground out of which the value-essence came. In this context, value would thus be

dependent on an ontological relation to an other that is the ground of the person, and

would not be self-sufficient. As a result, value would have to refer to an other, placing

value within a more Levinasian framework in which ethics is understood in terms of the

relation between self and other. The ground of value would be the other who brings the

self into existence at all. Rather than being neutral to and organized irrespective of the

relation between the self and the other, value would be constituted by the other. Yet this

would not really be Scheler's value, for all supposed value would be reducible to its

foundation in the Other, which would entail that value is not an essence, something self-

contained, self-sustaining, and self-unifying. Scheler has, however, explicitly repudiated

this possibility in his denial that the valuative order depends on the relation between self

and other. All meaning, worth, and value is given by the Other, implying that value is no longer a useful or applicable term insofar as the word *value* points to a domain beyond the existential domain of the encounter with the face of this Other.

Instead of being ethically informative, value turns out to cover up the path to a phenomenological ethics by introducing a foreign imposition upon the ethical experience. Value amounts to a tyranny over love and the person who loves. For in reality, against Scheler and value ethics, no person exists by herself, and she does not act alone; she depends upon, in the vocabulary of Emmanuel Levinas, an Other. Whatever value might inform her ethical decisions will be given by the Other, reducible to the Other, so that the source of normativity should simply be called the Other, and not value. Value would place ethics on an alien foundation that comes from outside of the concrete daily relations that one has with the world of others and things. Value, organized according to its own independent hierarchy, would continue the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness, is and ought. By constituting a separate realm of the ought, value ethics turns out to be a deontology.

Consequently, Philip Blosser, when he remarks that "Scheler's ethics…is overtly axiological," in contrast to the deontological "Kantian system of ethics," seems to me to incorrectly juxtapose value, the axiological, with duty, the deontological.[201] For, at the core of a deontological ethics is the claim that one must act according to a standard that as not grounded in the concrete situations and beings of existence is thus separated from the structures and conditions of Being. In deontology, one must fulfill one's duty, a duty to the law that requires obedience. This law that engenders duty, that commands the self

---

[201] Blosser 1995, 59.

absolutely, is a command that is not located in the changeable affairs of existence. Similarly, in the axiology of value, the source of normativity is distinct from the beings of the world, its own separate hierarchy and measure. In Scheler's value ethics, one is subject to the demands of value that one has the duty to obey. Any value ethics amounts to a deontology since in effect, values command, from out of their own independence, obedience, without being founded in one's existing character, nature, or even passions. Axiology, insofar as it refers to values as divorced from any notion of the good, is a deontology. Deontology, as the moral theory that places the sources of normativity in a foundation that is constituted by itself without any reference to the ontological standards of what exists, sources that from themselves demand obedience and set themselves up as the basis for ethics, includes a value ethics that interprets the normative to be comprised by its own distinct sphere. Though the passions of love might reveal value, this passion is not of the world. Passion has been elevated by Scheler, but its importance comes from its participation in the separate world of values. Scheler's intentional affectivity as ethically informative lacks ontological significance, meaning that such affectivity is divorced from the world of things and person. Feeling has been elevated beyond the world, now on the side of freedom, of goodness, rather than nature and being. Feeling in Scheler's view does not unite being and goodness, preventing affectivity from reuniting freedom and nature, being and goodness. Scheler has elevated feeling too far by directing it to values, returning to a fundamentally deontological register. Value is an ought not of this world, not of the Other but of itself—a value and ought that turn out to be empty insofar as they are not this Other. We must, then, turn to Emmanuel Levinas' discovery of the absolute priority of this Other. In this priority of the Other, however,

127

Levinas goes the other way than Scheler—falling into Deep Kantianism by denigrating passion into the level of nature in contrast to elevating passion into the empty heaven of value and morality.

Chapter Four
The Priority of Ethics and the Denigration of Affectivity: Levinas' Pathological Deep Kantianism

The tradition of phenomenological ethics was dominated by *Formalism in Ethics* and its wide influence, which inspired works as significant as Dietrich Von Hildebrand's *Ethics* as late as 1953, a book that, notably for continental philosophy at the time, was written in English and first published in the United States. This shows the extent to which phenomenological ethics in the form of value ethics had spread across the world beyond Europe. Only in 1961, nearly half a century, two world wars, and multiple genocides since the first part of *Formalism* was published did the field of phenomenological ethics see a new account of the standard and source of the ethical that differed from that given by value ethics. This new account was established by Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*, which marks the founding of the other primary school of phenomenological ethics—alterity ethics.[202] In this alterity ethics, Levinas suggests that ethics is first philosophy, where ethics itself is the ethical relation, referring to the face-to-face relation of the self to the concrete Other person, in stark contrast to any appeal to values. The self is constituted by its ethical relation to the Other, since the relation to the Other is the first relation, prior to any other relation to being or to things. In Levinas' own words, "preexisting the plane of ontology is the ethical plane."[203] Levinas is arguably the first in the history of philosophy to make ethics metaphysics; just as Max

---

[202] Loidolt 2017, 2. I should also note here that this also indicates the fundamentally different atmospheres and conditions in which Formalism and Totality and Infinity were written; alterity ethics begins in the face of what at best could be termed moral failure and at worst unspeakable evil, a context not at all shared by value ethics, which had no obvious moral failure to confront at the time of its founding. In this sense, alterity ethics takes on a fresh urgency, attempting to find anew and restore what Levinas calls the "humanism of the other man" (interview "Responsibility and Substitution," 231, in *Is it Righteous to Be?*). This urgency especially confronts us in Levinas' dedication of *Otherwise than Being* to those millions murdered in the Holocaust.

[203] *Totality and Infinity*, 201.

Scheler was the first to systematically recognize the ethically indicative place of affective intentionality, Levinas was the first to systematically recognize that ethics, the relation to the Other, is prior to all other relations, awarding ethics the status of first philosophy. This is the next clue, and Levinas's first clue, for overcoming Deep Kantianism. Kant misses a fundamental feature of the ethical life in his separation of nature and freedom, being and goodness, that leads him to ignore that ethics somehow has something fundamentally to do with concrete others in the world, suggesting that ethics itself is grounded in these concrete existing beings and not the moral law. Scheler begins to address this omission by rehabilitating affectivity such that it becomes revelatory of the ethical, but even in his success, Scheler directs this affectivity toward values that like the moral law stand apart from the daily existence. Scheler misses the concrete Other person in her alterity. As Levinas notes in *Totality and Infinity*, "[t]he presentation of being in the face does not have the status of a value."[204] Against Scheler, Levinas does not find the source of normativity to be in value but in the face of the Other. In opposition to value ethics, alterity ethics rejects any appeal to a source of normativity that is not located in the other person as the other person. In so doing, alterity ethics defends the basic assumption that ethics at its core has to do with dealing with others on their own terms. Levinas contributes to this conversation regarding the meaning and core of ethics by suggesting that the Other, thus a heteronomy, is the foundation for the ethical, a stark contrast to Kantian autonomy. However, this clue also remains troubled by the resonances of Deep Kantianism. Unlike Scheler, who elevates affectivity into the domain of freedom and goodness as ethically indicative, Levinas, like Kant, denigrates affectivity

---

[204] Ibid., 202.

and restricts it to the side of nature, or in Levinas' own language, the side of the egoist

self and its being, as opposed to the Good who is the Other. By denigrating affectivity,

the encounter with and being for the Other becomes problematized. But before I can turn

to Levinas' phenomenological ethics and his Deep Kantianism, there are some

preliminary considerations that must be addressed, forming the first section of this

chapter. In the second section, I will explicate Levinas' first clue to overcoming Deep

Kantianism, his discovery of the priority of ethics in the form of the ethical relation over

all other relations including those of ontology, and in the third and final section, I will

discuss how his ethics is haunted by Deep Kantianism.

Preliminary Considerations

That Levinas can be brought into conversation with Kant, and even is

conceptually close to Kant, is suggested by Levinas himself. In the short 1951 essay, "Is

Ontology Fundamental?" Levinas states that what is encountered in the face "seems

suggested by the practical philosophy of Kant, to which we feel particularly close."[205] In

the interviews of the volume *Is it Righteous to Be?*, Levinas further states, in the 1988

interview "Responsibility and Substitution," that "putting the other's existence before

[one's] own," that is, ethics, is "*a humanism of the other man*. This is not the affirmation

of human nature as a matter of rights, but rather as a matter of obligations. This is closer

to Kant than to Hegel and is, as a result, the challenge that Kant brings to Hegel."[206]

Levinas explicitly draws a connection between his ethics and Kant's ethics, inviting the

question of how precisely they relate, which in part is answered by the notion that to be a

---

[205] "Is Ontology Fundamental?," 10.
[206] *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 231.

person is firstly to be obligated to others; both Levinas' responsibility and Kant's duty mandate that the self always treat others as ends, that the self obey the demands that are imposed on it by the other. Always before I can attempt to claim my rights from the Other, I must acknowledge my obligation to the Other.

Both Levinas and Kant agree that the self is as an obligated being. Kant, like Levinas, grants priority to practical philosophy, which reaches toward what is more important than and beyond the capacity of theoretical, grasping reason. According to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, "practical reason presents beyond doubt…the *reality of the concepts* that are required for the possibility of the highest good, without, however, effecting by this increment the least extension of cognition in accordance with theoretical principles."[207] The power of practical reason, that is, the freedom of the will, moves the self to a domain beyond that which is subject to rational knowledge. Human discursive knowledge is restricted to the relatively narrow sphere of what appears in experience, a restriction that prevents objects of rational knowledge from serving as the standard of ethics. Yet freedom, the sphere of the practical, itself gives its own principles that ground normativity that are separate from all experience, similar to how for Levinas the sources of ethics are of an entirely different order than that of cognition and conceptualization. As will be discussed later in this chapter and in the subsequent chapter, Levinas opposes the ethical to the whole sphere of being and theoretical knowledge of being. Conceptualization and knowledge never formulate the ethical for Levinas or for Kant.

However, Levinas did not write *Totality and Infinity* as Scheler wrote *Formalism* as a response to Kant; admittedly, the connection between Levinas and Kant is thus not as

---

[207] *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 136.

immediately clear or extensive as that between Scheler and Kant. There is a clear mechanism for the transmission of Deep Kantianism into Scheler, provided by Scheler's own adoption of Kantian premises and directing *Formalism* toward responding to Kantian ethics, a mechanism that is as such missing from both *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*. What is most relevant here, though, is not necessarily an explicit, systematic mechanism for the transmission of Deep Kantianism into Levinas.

Rather, what I seek to establish is that conceptually, even if not necessarily developmentally, Levinas remains close to Kant. Both by his occasional specific references to Kant and in his architectonic similarities, Levinas brings himself into line with Kantian ethics. Levinas establishes an ethics that even in its novelty retains features that are, accidentally or otherwise, Kantian at their conceptual core. Demonstrating the presence of this Kantianism in Levinas' accounts of affectivity and ontology, is the task for this and the next chapter, respectively. Affectivity and Being turn out to be the conceptual space of Levinas' connection to Kant. Like Kant, Levinas, perhaps in part simply because he is writing after Kant, harbors a suspicion toward the affective and assumes that being itself is bare without any ethical implications.

Relatively little scholarship has been done on Levinas' theory of affectivity and the passions; the most notable is Andrew Tallon's article "Nonintentional Affectivity, Affective Intentionality, and the Ethical in Levinas' Philosophy," in which Tallon claims that for Levinas, affectivity, both intentional and nonintentional, is the condition for the possibility of ethical responsibility at all.[208] Affectivity in this reading operates in a fundamentally positive role for Levinas. Specifically, Tallon states that the "claim that

---

[208] Tallon 1995, 107.

there is a nonintentional affectivity has in Levinas' employment of it the structure of a practical postulate offered to explain the feeling of responsibility occasioned by the face of the other."[209] In this view, Levinas grants affectivity an ethically relevant role, in which responsibility is an affective feeling. This affective feeling is fundamentally a response, which assumes "value" that "imposes a demand, obligation, or call for an adequate response."[210] Responsibility is response to a value; in other words, affectivity responds to values. According to Tallon, "affectability itself—the ground of responsibility—is based on something prior to itself, namely, a nonintentional connaturality, affinity, kinship, solidarity," that is constituted by the "creation of oneself as a member of the human species."[211] Solidarity and kinship are grounded in a shared nature, which belongs to both the self and the other insofar as they are both individuals contained within the human species. As sharing in human nature, the self feels through the face of the other the value of this other person, meaning that Levinasian responsibility for Tallon occurs through the affection of the values shared by beings of the same nature.

This interpretation as a reading of Levinas is, however, quite problematic; the first difficulty is that Levinas never identifies responsibility and obligation as affections, and sometimes goes so far as to juxtapose affection and responsibility. Tallon provides little to no textual evidence to support his claim that responsibility is a feeling. The second and more significant problem is Tallon's appeal to a common nature, to a human species, despite the fact that Levinas not only never appeals to any general concept of some shared nature to explain how the self relates to the Other, but explicitly rejects any

---

[209] *Ibid.*, 108.
[210] *Ibid.*, 109.
[211] *Ibid.*, 109, 114.

common essence to explain the basis of ethics. For any attempt to explain ethical responsibility in terms of human nature or species would be a totalization that reduces the Other to the same, comprehending the Other within a closed system in which the Other is simply an instantiation of some common species that is universally shared among all humans. This would annihilate the Other, who would no longer be other, but only the same, a replaceable instance of a general nature, having been given meaning by being part of some greater repeatable species or nature. The Other vanishes in Tallon's reading, entirely against Levinas' phenomenological account of the encounter with the Other as absolutely other, as a transcendence that refuses all totalization. The third and final difficulty, as hinted at by Tallon's use of the term *value*, is that Tallon appeals to thinkers besides Levinas to explain Levinas, such as Scheler and Ricoeur. However, they are not Levinas, and as long as Levinas' own theory of the passions is not yet clarified, their introduction only complicates instead of elucidating the question of affectivity in Levinas.

Recently, Sarah Horton has offered a more sophisticated account of the possibility that Levinas is sympathetic to the affective, in her article "The Joy of Desire: Understanding Levinas's Desire of the Other as Gift." Her thesis is that "the Desire of the Other still offers me the promise of future joy and the possibility of imperfect rejoicing in the present."[212] In desiring the Other, the self is able to experience joy in directing herself toward the Other. Horton's primary argument is that "[t]he Other 'compels me to goodness,' yet that goodness is better than any goods I could receive.

---

[212] Horton 2017, 2.

Thus Levinas makes it clear that in my responsibility, I find my own good as well."[213]

The goodness of taking up one's own responsibility for the Other surpasses the goods that might belong to me. Things or dispositions that are good, such as wealth, courage, fame, pleasure, wisdom, health, and so forth, can in no way measure up to the goodness of living for Others. The self, on Horton's account, finds its good then in being compelled to goodness by being-for-the-Other. Yet if the self is good by taking up its responsibility, then having, if only partially, satisfied its good, it should feel affective joy as the response to having received its goodness in responsibility. Therefore, "the Desire of the Other is not a burden but is rather the condition of possibility for joy."[214] Metaphysical Desire, as what opens the self to its responsibility for the Other, a responsibility that is the good, allows for the self to have an affective response to its good at all. For without being opened to the Other, the self would never have the good or be able to feel joy in the good.

Though a phenomenologically accurate account of the relation between goodness, desire, and joy, Horton's argument is difficult to fully apply to Levinas without doing violence to his text. The very phrase, 'compels me to goodness' to which Horton appeals is problematic in that the language of compelling suggests that I am unwilling to be good; but if I am unwilling to be good, do I really desire the goodness of responsibility? Further, being compelled to goodness, even if I desire it, does not mean that such goodness is my good, the good for me; it could quite possibly be the good precisely in spite of me, which Levinas seems more likely to suggest. For in his words, "the for-another is a despite-oneself;" "for the other, despite oneself, starting with oneself, the

---

[213] *Ibid*., 10. The quote "compels me to goodness" is from a passage in *Of God who Comes to Mind*, p. 114 that Horton cites at length.
[214] *Ibid*., 25.

pain of labor in the patience of ageing, in the duty to give to the other even the bread out

of one's own mouth" in a "pain [that] comes to interrupt an enjoyment."[215] This passage

from *Otherwise than Being* is enough to challenge Horton's otherwise excellent account

as an interpretation of Levinas, who seems to articulate any affective desire, even if it

directs the self to the Other, as culminating in a demand that the self abase itself in an

emotional dark night.

Despite these positive, thematically-focused readings that grant Levinas a

favorable stance toward affectivity, arguably the dominant consensus in current research

has been that Levinas is opposed to the affective. Notably, Merold Westphal has argued

that "Levinas is more nearly Kantian. We find duty but not delight in his account of the

other's unconditional claims on us."[216] Similarly, Catherine Chalier, though not

explicitly focusing on the theme of Levinas and affectivity, states that from Levinas'

perspective, "we would much prefer to be loved by God and not have to care for our

neighbor."[217] To not be required to be responsible for the Other, yet to receive all the

benefits and blessings of the love of God for ourselves, would be most pleasant. This

deeply rooted desire or more accurately in Levinas' own language *need* of the self is what

his ethics resists, the wish of the self to pursue its own egoist pleasure. Joy and affective

warmth are in opposition to responsibility; thus performing one's duties, as Westphal

notices, is for Levinas an ultimately joyless and painful task. During the course of this

chapter, my account of Levinas' theory of the passions will be more closely aligned with

Westphal's and Chalier's interpretations, though I hope to go beyond these readings by

---

[215] *Otherwise than Being*, 55.
[216] Westphal 2017, 229, n. 43.
[217] Chalier 2019, 148.

focusing thematically as a whole on affectivity as it appears throughout Levinas' works. To show how Levinas' is haunted by Deep Kantianism requires that the place where Deep Kantianism appears be first clarified. Before I can show how Levinasian affectivity is permeated by Deep Kantianism, I must consequently spend time establishing what exactly is the structure and account of affectivity given by Levinas in his philosophy.

The status of affectivity for Levinas is further complicated by the diverse terms that he employs that carry affective connotations. He regularly uses the language of affectivity to describe central features of his ethical philosophy; among these are enjoyment (*jouissance*), need (*le besoin*), metaphysical desire (*le désir*), sensibility (*sensibilité*), love (*l'amour*), eros (*Éros*), happiness (*bonheur*), *conatus essendi*, and passivity (*passivité*). To understand Levinas' theory of passion requires an interpretation that explains what each of these terms themselves means, how these various terms relate to one another, and how these provide an account of the overall phenomenon of affectivity. Throughout this chapter, I will weave these different terms together into a coherent whole to facilitate an understanding of what Levinas is getting at in his discussions of affectivity. Since Levinas establishes alterity ethics in *Totality and Infinity*, it is the natural point of departure both for searching for the next clue to overcoming Deep Kantianism and for how this clue by retaining a Kantian rupture between the ethical and the affective might be haunted by Deep Kantianism.

Ethics as First Philosophy

Like Scheler, who critiques philosophy as having been dominated by the prejudice that the person is reason and sensation alone, Levinas too critiques philosophy

as dominated by an equally pervasive prejudice. Both Scheler and Levinas in their phenomenological ethics seek to challenge the unjustified assumptions of previous philosophy and ethics. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes that "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being."[218] The history of philosophy is the history of ontology, which collapses alterity into the order of the same through subjecting all things to Being. What has priority is the relation to being, to that by which things are. Persons, both self and Other, along with material things, are defined in terms of Being, which exhausts what they are—mere beings or entities. As entities, persons are simply parts of the whole of being, interacting with each other according to the measure of being, in which each person is posited in a totality that exchanges each individual for any other individual, leading to all being the same without alterity.

That is, "[t]he meaning of individuals (invisible outside of this totality) is derived from the totality."[219] If something does not belong to the whole of Being, then it is invisible, its significance and existence denied. Only from having been established in terms of the totality can the individual thing have meaning, without which it would be nothing at all. As such, every particular existent lacks inherent meaning once posited in a totality, for it receives its significance solely from the totality that is prior to the individual. Were the thing to provide its own meaning, it would at least partially remain beyond the totality in this meaningfulness. It would not be fully totalized. Yet, as not totalized, it would resist the domination imposed by the totality. This totality cannot allow anything exterior to itself to exist because this exteriority would threaten the

---

[218] *Totality and Infinity*, 43.
[219] Ibid., 22.

integrity of the totality that is to have positioned all entities within itself. The totalization of Being reduces all beings to the order of the same. Every atom, every being, is equally replaceable insofar as each has been defined by the totality that grants each thing meaning from one source, collapsing all beings into the same. This sameness is constituted by "[t]he visage of being that shows itself in war is fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy. Individuals are reduced to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves."[220] The visage of being thus amounts to the "comprehension of beings," or "ontology."[221] The use of the terms comprehension and war reveals that for Levinas the totalization of Being takes place through a self that comprehends and makes war. The violence of totalization, which becomes manifest most clearly in war, does not occur by some immovable forces but by the self that seeks to dominate others and convert them into the same by the synchrony of warfare and comprehension. That is, the self is guilty of totalization, of conducting ontology. I will begin by describing how totalization occurs by comprehension and then turn to how this is manifest as war.

Totalization is the act of knowing of and by the self; the relation to being is introduced by and a tool for the lordship of the self. For ontology "is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is an existent…to a relation with the *Being of existents*, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents (a relationship of knowing)."[222] The self defines entities by Being since through it, the self is able to dominate the things and persons of the world. Before any other relation to things in their

---

[220] Ibid., 21.
[221] *Ibid*., 42.
[222] *Ibid*., 45.

particularity, they must be posited as existing, as participating in Being as comprehending them in a totality, without which they would not be at all. But if they were not, then no relation to them would be possible. The particularity of things depends first upon having been constituted by being participants in Being, through which a thing can be this thing in the first place. In Levinas' own words, "[d]oes not all knowledge of relations by which beings are connected or opposed to one another already involve the comprehension of the fact that these relations and these beings exist?"[223] Any discussion of biology, ethics, aesthetics, physics, music, and the other disciplines assumes the ontological as such, that the things that they discuss somehow exist. Existence—Being—is the first relation and the first discipline. One knows that something exists, an existence that as common to all things precedes things, meaning that the universal Being in which all entities participate is prior.

This totality is posited by the self so that the self can know beings, through reducing them to parts of a system. For to know involves a moment of bringing into oneself; knowledge requires that the thing in the world be taken into the self, or else there would not be knowledge. To encounter something, to know something, presupposes that the thing makes an impact on the self such that it has entered into the self. The self must comprehend, take into itself, the things that it experiences for it to know. If there was an absolute divide between the self and things, then it would never be able to encounter these, mandating a common term, shared between both the self and things, to which things can be reduced so that they can be brought into the self in knowledge. This common term is Being. The self does not encounter Being as another entity, but rather

---

[223] "Is Ontology Fundamental?," 2.

posits Being as that by which things are. In the act of knowing, one states that the thing as existing is known. Only what exists is known, or else one knows nothing. The self states that this thing is, that this thing is this other thing, the emphasis here being on the *is* itself. To posit that 'this' *is* 'that,' makes two things equivalent. These two are no longer distinct, the one having been equated to the other, leveled down by the is. This *is* that— identity and erasure of difference. Even to posit that a thing *is*, understands this thing in terms of the is. The thing *is*, a relation that is said to be the originary relation, that something is. Before the self can engage with something, before something can become relevant, the thing must have been posited as participating in the *is*. This *is* has been equated by the self with is power of knowing. Yet another thing is also posited to be; the first and the second thing both *are*. *To be* is shared, common, in which there is nothing other. Both of these things gain their significance to me insofar as I have posited that they are members of the whole of Being. This *is*, as common to and allowing for things, permits knowledge, which must always be the knowledge of the same. The same is the self that in its knowledge has positioned all things in the totality of Being. Levinas here is using Being in the sense of that by which the self knows. Being is reduced to its epistemological meaning as the comprehended and grasped relation of the self with all other entities and their causes. Thus, ontology is an egoism.[224] Ontology turns out to be the absolute priority of the self above all others, for these others can never approach the self unless first collapsed into the totality posited by the self.

---

[224] TI, 46. There is much more to say about how Levinas understands Being; his ontology is far from clear, since Being appears in his work with various meanings that do not immediately line up. As will be seen later in this chapter and especially in the subsequent chapter, there are at least two or three ways that the term Being is employed by Levinas.

Though it starts as the mechanism for the comprehension by the self, Being is announced more sinisterly as war for Levinas. Being becomes war since it is the tool by which the self dominates the tings and others that in encounters in its life. War is the manifestation of the evidence of Being, in which all entities and persons are articulated in terms of their role for the totality that has been established by the egoist self. The priority of the egoist self as the source of the unethical dimension of Being is indicated by Levinas when he writes that "[t]he relation with Being that is enacted in ontology consists in neutralizing the existent in order to comprehend or grasp it."[225] The things of the world are subsumed under Being, are grasped, which implies a being who does the grasping, who brings other entities into itself, without concern for their uniqueness and alterity. The other is reduced to the same by the same itself. Levinas further confirms this when he states that "the definition of freedom" is "to maintain oneself against the other, despite every relation with the other to ensure the autarchy of an I. Thematization and conceptualization, which moreover are inseparable, are not at peace with the other but suppression or possession of the other."[226] Within the sphere of bare Being alone, there would be no place for the existent that is the I, which would have been absorbed into the anonymity and the impersonality of Being. This would not even constitute an ethical domain, since there would be no relation between same and other. Suppression of the Other first demands not only that there be an Other who can be dominated, but also that there be a self who seeks to command the Other. There must be an I for there to be the possibility of an autarchy, a rule of the self. Being without the intervention of the I cannot thematize and conceptualize, which are necessarily acts of the self that introduces

---

[225] *Ibid.*, 45-46.
[226] *Ibid.*, 46.

Being as the third. The self, not bare Being, strives to possess the Other, to subdue the

Other under its lordship—to wage war.

Being turns out to be problematic insofar as it is the term that designates the

egoist tendency of the self for its own exaltation. There is an egoist self, and then there is

Being, deployed by the self. Though this is hardly Levinas' final word on Being, Being

here designates the totalizing efforts of the self. This claim of Levinas significantly

implicates the self in the violence that oppresses the Other. Being does not oppress the

Other, but the self that is I myself oppress the Other. I am guilty for having always

already attempted to possess the Other, in the simple act of knowledge or comprehension

itself. Simply by knowing the Other, by saying that she is this or that, that she is

anything at all, the fact that she is, I have subsumed her under Being, demanding that she

be understood out of the generality of Being. I have done violence to the Other; I cannot

blame Being for making me commit violence. Myself alone can I accuse.

Consequently, that "being reveals itself as war," the bold claim with which

Levinas begins *Totality and Infinity*, is my fault. I am the perpetrator of the violence of

Being. I say that the Other is, which is to say that she is mine. Yet, as Other, she defies

my violence, leading to an endless series of wars where I encounter her only as the one

who by resisting my power becomes my enemy. As described by Levinas in *Otherwise

than Being*, "Being's interest takes dramatic form in egoisms struggling with one another,

each against all, in the multiplicity of allergic egoisms which are at war with one

another."[227] In both *Totality and Infinity* and in *Otherwise than Being*, there is for

Levinas a concept of Being that he interprets as the egoist violence and totalization

---

[227] OtB, 4.

conducted by the self. Being becomes manifest as war when the self finds itself resisted by the others who it encounters. The self has by means of Being established a totality that serves the interests of the self. In having established this totality, the self maintains that each part of the totality of Being only has worth insofar as it serves the interests of the self. Therefore, each part of the totality is deployed by the self for the sake of the self's exaltation. However, the self is confronted by the other self who refuses to be totalized, the other self who as having its own interests has already established its own totality. This other self, as simply serving its own interests within the totality is encountered from the perspective of Being as simply another ego, another I, who I myself seek to subdue. I myself have denied the alterity of the other self, who appears to me from within the totality as a copy of myself, and not an Other. Since both the self and this other self are seeking their own separate exaltation, since both desire their own glory to the exclusion of any other, war breaks out. The self struggles against the other self, attempting endless to totalize the other into itself, culminating in the violence of war where the self goes so far as to kill the other self that opposes its own interests.

Significantly, the totality of Being is manifest in war when the self has articulated other selves in its own service. The self only sees these other selves as instruments to ensure its own power and exaltation; thus, it believes itself to be wholly justified in using them, exploiting, them, and expending them to further its own interests. In war, the self has decided that some other selves are more useful if hurled against enemy positions, to distract the enemy, while yet other selves are sent around the back to destroy the enemy. The alterity of each person entirely vanishes in war, which seeks to justify using each other self to ensure the preservation of the totality of the self itself. War exemplifies

145

Being precisely in that every person becomes expendable, a tool for some further end. The worth of the person is conferred upon her by the external forces of the totality that claim that she is simply a part of the great whole of the totality that demands her service. The self, in pursuance of its exaltation, makes war and demands that other selves serve its interests so that it might be glorified and strengthened.

Though this is clearly a rather literal interpretation of what Levinas means by Being as war, the totality of Being itself, even if not the violence of the battlefield, is always in a sense war. For any totality, even if it does not actively demand that various persons be slaughtered for its ends, defines these persons in terms of their worth and participation in the totality. They have no alterity that would set them apart from this totality. Their meaningfulness is exhausted by the totality. As such, the totality commits violence against the other by denying her alterity, by denying her unforeseeable, novel, and strange constitution. She may not act, may not live, except by and within the totality. The totality is to define her entirely. War, the furthest possibility and the culmination of totality, extends all the way through the totality as what denies the alterity and uniqueness of the Other. To accuse bare inert Being of war would make little sense; only one who makes war, only one who seeks to exalt oneself at the expense of all others can wage war. Being as war is the war perpetrated by the self. I myself am the one who has engaged in war against the Other; I have done this, I am the one who has already turned by back on the Other in exchange for securing my place in the sun.

Thus, the fundamental categories for Levinas are those of the self or the same in opposition to the Other or alterity. The sense of Being that Levinas employs in this context is generalized to signify the whole of what is opposed to the ethical; Being refers

146

to the totalizing efforts of the self that would seek to reduce all to the same, to the egoist self. In the sense of having being generalized to designate the order of the same, Being itself is not primal; the primal category here is the *self* that implements Being as the third term that allows for the self in its powers of comprehension to totalize all that seems to be outside of the self. The ontological for Levinas refers to what is opposed in the motions of totalization and warfare to the recognition of the uniqueness and alterity of the Other, to the ethical. This is not the only way that Levinas employs the term Being, however, which I will address at greater length in the following chapter.[228]

The presupposition of the priority of ontology is as ancient as Socrates; "[t]his primacy of the same was Socrates' teaching: to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me, as though from all eternity I was in possession of what comes to me from the outside—to receive nothing, or to be free."[229] Philosophy has maintained that metaphysics is ontology itself, the knowledge of Being and beings and in which terms all things must be defined. The philosopher must begin with Being. Only what is, what participates in Being and thus already belongs to the self, may enter into the self. The self can never receive what is wholly other than itself, what refuses to be subject to the is,

---

[228] Initially, this reading of Levinas' stance regarding ontology might seem to be in tension with what he states in *Existence and Existents*, a work that approaches "the idea of Being in general in its impersonality," from "which a being, a subject, an existent, arises in impersonal Being" (3). This makes out that Being in general precedes the self, who emerges out of Being. However, this Being in general turns out to not be the Being of *Totality and Infinity*. Between the 1947 publication of *Existence and Existents* and the 1961 publication of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas would come to identify the Being in general of the former with what he calls the elemental in the latter. The self might have an elemental origin, arising out of the elements of earth, sky, ocean, and wind. Being as properly used in the 1961 treatise refers more broadly to the third term, the is itself, introduced by the egoist self in its project of totalization. The movement would be from the elemental to the self, and only then to Being. The elemental as such is prior to Being, which is posited by the comprehending self. The elemental, the impersonal *there is*, the *il y a*, refers to that which escapes the scope of thematized Being. This is precisely the source of the impenetrable anonymity of the *there is*. The *there is* must be read as pre-ontological, as material depth. The relation between Being and the elemental for Levinas that I mention briefly here will be clarified in the following chapter.
[229] TI, 43.

since this would come from outside the same and consequently share nothing with the same. Therefore, the self can only receive what is always already in itself, that which from the beginning belongs to itself, what is ultimately the same. The whole world that is encountered is simply a mode of the self's Being, which has always contained within itself, if only latently, what is supposedly external. Freedom is the capacity to not be affected by the absolutely Other, which would jeopardize the power of the self. To be free means to have all start from oneself, where one is able to from oneself establish one's world and the being of the world according to the self's own measure. For the self to be free is for the self to be free from anything besides itself. As controlling its domain of the same, the self, has no challengers as long as it demands that all be reduced to itself, to its comprehension and strength. The history of philosophy is the thus the history of egoism.

As Levinas states, "*Being* before the *existent*….is a movement within the same before obligation to the other….[But] the terms must be reversed."[230] In ontology, in the sense with which it has been deployed by Levinas here, the self posits Being before particular entities. But, the truth is that the other precedes the same; the existent precedes Being. What Levinas is trying to show, as he describes in his interview "Ethics of the Infinite," is "that man's ethical relation to the other is ultimately prior to his ontological relation to himself (egology) or to the totality of things which we call the world (cosmology)."[231] The relation to Being is divided into two parts; the relation to the existence of one's own self, egology, and the relation to the existence of things. According to Levinas, despite the self's desire for its own priority, the self does not first

---

[230] *Ibid.*, 47.
[231] "Ethics of the Infinite," 72.

encounter itself in its Being, and then encounter others or things; it does not begin with itself. Similarly, the self also does not first encounter things in their Being and then somehow exist by its relation to the existence of these things. The self is neither self-sufficient nor the result of a sequence of cosmological causes. Rather, before being related to herself or to things, the person is related to the Other. This relation is the ethical relation, reversing the status of the relation to the Being of oneself or to things so that the jointure with the Other is the primordial relation.

This reversal, this precedence of the Other, is what Levinas calls ethics, which takes the place of ontology as metaphysics. Levinas writes, "[w]e name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics."[232] The priority of Being, the same, and the self is challenged by the ethical, defined precisely as the relation to the Other. The Other is that which I cannot totalize, what resists reduction to the order of Being and the same. That is, the Other is exterior, not internal to myself. As exterior to myself, the very encounter with the Other implies that the totality of Being is challenged. For if the Other cannot be reduced to Being, then this totality is shattered, since there would be something outside of it, other than it. The self in the egoist comfort of the monopolization of the same would be interrupted and questioned. It would be stripped of its freedom to do as it wills, since not all that it encounters is within its purview. There is something, some Other, that it cannot identify with itself. No longer

---

[232] *Ibid*., 43.

149

can the self act as if all begins with itself in pure spontaneity when confronted by the Other.

This Other that confronts the self and marks the advent of the ethical in the disruption of the ontological is the personal Other; the Other is the human person. As early as *Existence and Existents* in 1947, Levinas writes that "[t]he other is the neighbor."[233] The term neighbor already suggests that the Other refers to the human being, for one is a neighbor with a person, not with a thing or environment. A neighbor is one with whom one speaks and for whom one cares. This is further indicated by the claim from Time and the Other that "we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery."[234] As already implied by the word neighbor, the other in a way is similar to the self. As similar, both are what would be called human persons. A person is a person, is other, in that she is similar to the self who is also a human person but she cannot at all be reduced to the self. The grasping of theory falls short, leaving her a mystery in her exteriority. Later in *Time and the Other*, Levinas confirms this suggestion with his statement that "[t]he relationship with the Other, the face-to-face with the Other [is] the encounter with a face that at once gives and conceals."[235] The being who is the Other is a being who has a face, excluding from the beginning the possibility that inert material things are the Other. A face is that which welcomes, what gives place to me, what is open to me, what responds to me. When I am before a face, I am immediately aware of the presence of this Other who simply by having a face has always already in some way acknowledged me.

---

[233] *Existence and Existents*, 99.
[234] *Time and the Other*, 75.
[235] Ibid., 78-79.

Moreover, a face, besides welcoming me, also manifests the dispositions, passions, and character of the Other, who reveals herself in her face, and in so revealing herself grants me place. For how she stands with respect to me, and her feelings regarding me, appear on her face. Her face reveals herself and her passions to me, yet also conceals in the revelation of herself. Even as the face shows forth an Other, the face points to an alterity that I can never grasp. The Other, as having an existence that is in no way reducible to my own, does not manifest herself as a whole in her face. Most of her own self remains hidden in my encounter with her. No matter how much I gaze at the face, she remains always Other, always mysterious in her alterity that does not present itself. Yet, as both presenting and not presenting herself, the Other is able to welcome me with her face. In giving to me her response, in turning her face toward me, she at the same time remains concealed; she herself, as this unique alterity, does not fully appear. By not appearing, she remains always other than me, always impenetrable to my comprehension, allowing me to be drawn into herself. The simultaneity of her givenness and concealment of her alterity is precisely what allows her to have a place for me.

This place is revealed by her face that is openness itself, in contrast to the closedness of things. The thing stands in itself, entirely exhaustible to the grasping of my knowledge, never withdrawing from my gaze. Through various processes and techniques, I am able to manipulate the thing so that it has become available to me completely. I have absorbed it in my knowledge of it, where I have represented it within myself, reducing it to myself. As reducible to myself, the thing belongs to the sphere of the same. The thing is able to be reduced to the same since as in itself, it is simply itself and nothing else. It bears no relation to what is other than itself. What would be called

the relations of cause and effect, of various things impacting upon this one thing, ranging from impacts that bounce off or merely influence this thing to those that utterly destroy this thing, are impacts of closed objects upon other closed objects without reference to such closed objects. In other words, there is no actual relation between the one object and the other object, since even though the one object might go so far as to depend for its existence on the basis of a certain other object, this first object does not tend toward its source in the other object. The first object has received itself from the grounding object, but the first object remains closed in itself without any tendency back toward its ground.

Even though what would be called the causal relation is inherent to the first object insofar as it exists at all, the object rejects this relation in its closure. As only itself and standing in itself, the object does not turn back upon the relation. For the relation assumes a difference between the one object that is the effect and the prior object that is the cause of such effected object. This difference between the cause and the effect is precisely what unites the two, yet recognizes by definition the simultaneous separation and jointure between them. In their separation, in their difference, they are joined ontologically since the effect inheres, stands in, the cause in terms of its existence, since without the cause, there would be no effect. Yet, the effected material object as closed off in itself rejects the jointure between the two. It refuses the jointure of cause and effect, having been as an in itself articulated as a separation. The material object as separation is no longer difference, since as closedness it has completely rejected its cause. Standing in itself without relation to cause, the object is trapped in its own sameness that would preclude difference. Difference is difference between this and that, or perhaps even difference between this and this, difference in itself, but this difference immediately

152

points to a further alterity embedded in an entity, pointing the entity beyond itself. Of course, ontologically, in the object as inhering in its cause difference actually remains, but the object or thing is blind to this difference, preventing jointure and the tending toward its cause. The material object rejects all alterity and difference. As divorced from its cause, it remains removed from its ground by which it is. Therefore, the material object is isolated from its ground, meaning that in its existence the object is only itself and nothing else. It is exhausted by its being itself closed in itself, indicating that it can be wholly examined and converted into the same by the manipulations of the knowing self. It in no way can stand as other than the self, which means that alterity cannot be found in the material thing.

This face is the distinctively human face, which Levinas already suggests in *Time and the Other* when he writes that "the face-to-face with the Other" is "the intersubjective relationship," "the relationship between humans."[236] The Other is the human Other, excluding animals as well as things from alterity. For the animal, though it senses the world around it and appears at first glance to respond to this world, fundamentally returns to itself, preventing it from actually tending outside of itself in openness. The animal is a for itself, a being that in its existence seeks only itself, seeks to maintain itself in its Being. In its sensing the world, the animal senses what is outside of it, but it brings this external thing into itself in the paradigm of how it can exploit this thing for the gain of the animal organism. The exteriority of any entity is immediately reduced to the consumption of the animal, preventing the animal from having a relation with other beings as other than itself. Fundamentally, the animal only encounters itself.

---

[236] Ibid., 79.

Consequently, the face of which Levinas speaks is not the face of the animal, but the face of the other human being, the one who by her face welcomes me as other than herself. The Other is the human person.[237]

Levinas further characterizes the humanity of the face of the Other when in the lecture "Diachrony and Representation," writing that "the alterity of the other person to an ego is first—and I dare to say, is 'positively'—the face of the other person obligating the ego, which, from the first—without deliberation—is responsive to the Other."[238] The self is constituted as a response to the Other human person, who in her alterity draws the entity that is the self out of itself, brings the self to tend outside of itself toward the Other in responsibility. The self becomes itself through being summoned to responsibility. The Other person who both conceals and reveals herself in her face gives to me a depth that grants place to me. I am able to be directed beyond myself in responsibility through the Other who by her otherness does not allow me to rest in myself in the monotony of the same. As oriented to exteriority without return to the self, the Other is the infinite.

The idea of the infinite, according to Levinas in the 1979 lecture "The Old and the New," "comes to me in the concreteness of my relation to the other person, in the sociality which is my responsibility for the neighbor."[239] The Other is the concrete other person who I encounter as the neighbor; by neighbor, Levinas does not mean the literal person who lives next door, but signifies each and every other person who I encounter in daily life. Every face that I see, even of the stranger who passes me by on the street, is

---

[237] And perhaps also a or the divine person for Levinas as well, though he remains unclear on this point. Certainly, for Levinas, whatever divine face that there might be cannot exclude the human face, which has primordial status. The confluence of questions, however, of God, the divine, and religion that are appearing here are beyond the scope of this study.

[238] "Diachrony and Representation," 105, in *Time and the Other and additional essays*.

[239] "The Old and the New," 136, in *Time and the Other and additional essays*.

the face of the neighbor. I am able to encounter a face at all since I tend outside of myself in responsibility to which I am summoned by the Other, who commands me through her infinite alterity. The Other, as the openness of the face, tends outside of herself toward what and who is other than her as other. This tending of the Other beyond herself allows for the self to tend toward the Other in the first place.

That is, the tending of the Other toward the self calls the self to tend toward the Other. Tending away from herself opens up the Other so that she is not merely herself, closed in on herself, but other than herself. To be open is to be always other, which implies that alterity as alterity is openness to other Others. As directed outside of herself, the movement of the Other away from herself brings the self into the Other, who is thus encountered in her second-personality. The Other is this concrete Other being who is the second-person, neither the first-personality of myself nor the third-personality of material things. In her second-personality, the Other refuses all theory as this unique Other, who cannot be manipulated or grasped by the comprehension of knowledge. Apart from whatever I might say about the Other, apart from whatever categories with which I attempt to describe or analyze her, the Other is an alterity that I never have access to. Through "the face of the Other, through its alterity, through its very strangeness, speaks the commandment which came from one knows not where….an unknown source…an inaccessible original."[240] Precisely in not having access to this alterity am I responsible for and to this alterity. For I only am on the condition that this alterity summons me to responsibility, to being-for-the-Other. In Levinas' own words from Otherwise than Being, "[t]he one-for-the-other goes to the extent of the-one-being-hostage-for-the-

---

[240] Ibid.

other."[241] The openness of the Other calls me to openness. I am open by the openness of alterity; I am other than myself, more than a thing, by the alterity of the Other herself. There is a motion of exteriorization that occurs by the exteriority of the Other that consists in the concrete Other human person, whose interiority is more exterior than any other exteriority. The interiority of the Other is the ultimate exteriority, an interior exteriority that allows me to become an exterior interiority—responsibility, the reception and openness to the approach of the Other. Insofar as I am myself, I have always already received the Other.

Though Levinas does not articulate his ethics as a response to Kant as did Scheler, the precedence of the Other over the self stands conceptually as a rebuttal to the Kantian preference for autonomy over heteronomy. Levinas has established an alterity ethics that one could say begins with the given, the fact, of the primordiality of the Other person, who is the source of my obligation and the moral law. I do not find for Levinas, in contrast to Kant, the law in myself to the exclusion of all that is beyond me; rather, the law comes directly from the Other person, from a source that is not my own. The law as given by the Other is heteronomy against all autonomy. Levinas has shown that the supreme principle of morality is heteronomy, rather than autonomy. Against the egoism present in so much philosophy that grants highest status to the self, Levinas definitively establishes in his phenomenological analyses that the relation to the Other is the first relation, that the ethical relation is before all other relations. The self as constituted in responsibility must orient itself to the Other. Any alternative account for ethics will remain on an egoist foundation, including Kant's universal law.

---

[241] OtB, 141.

Levinas explains: "one habitually begins with the universality of the moral law: the great Kantian idea," yet in opposition Levinas begins with "the idea that ethics arises in the relation to the other and not straightaway by a reference to the universality of a law. The 'relation' to the other man as unique—and in this way, precisely, as absolutely other."[242] This passage from *Is it Righteous to Be?* is one of the few times that Levinas directly contrasts his ethics with that of Kant; Kant wrongly prioritizes the self over the Other, while also incorrectly, as Levinas has here so clearly noted, puts weight on universality that excludes the unique Other. To emphasize the universal over the uniqueness of the Other places the Other into a totality of a law that defines the Other in terms of her relation to universality. In universality, the self rejects the alterity of the Other and its own responsibility, since it refuses to heed the demands imposed upon it by each particular Other. The unique Other in front of me, with her specific needs, is ignored in favor of the universality of a law that dictates how I am to care for her, without concern for what she actually needs. Levinas seeks to establish the uniqueness of my responsibility for each and every other Other as the result of the uniqueness of alterity. The source of all normativity is located in the Other, who is the good and the standard of how I am to live my life. Ethics is the ethics of the Other.

This encounter with alterity, as other than the self, would necessarily be a reception, a passivity on the count of the self that is subject to the coming of the Other. Since the Other is not from the self, the calculative, rational powers of the self and its own drives that aim at its exaltation are not the place where the Other becomes manifest. Action, as emerging from the self, is not involved in the primordial encounter with the

---

[242] *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 114.

Other. The self as receiving alterity is passive. The Other is exterior to acts of knowledge, volition, and bodily drives; this suggests that the Other would appear in affectivity and passion, in which the self receives what is not of its own origin, what has its origin beyond the self. Passion and emotion are the feeling of, the being moved by, something besides the self. The mode of encountering the Other as other would seem to be through the heart and its passions. The Other, as the Good, would seem to be revealed by intentional affectivity, the structure of affectivity discovered by Scheler in his value ethics. Affectivity would be the place for the feeling of the Good, revealing how a person is to behave on the basis of being oriented to the Other in the concrete face-to-face encounter. Responsibility would be constituted by a passion for the Other that directs me to care for and serve her. The relation to the Other, the Good, would be given by feeling; would feeling then not occupy center stage in Levinas' ethics, and would affectivity not be a way for the overcoming of Deep Kantianism through a recognition of the priority of this Other as passionately disclosed? Would the good and being not be unified in the felt openness to this heteronomous Other? For the Other, as the good, is revealed through passions, which themselves exist in experience and are encountered in the self as oriented to the Other, crossing the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness.

However, despite this seemingly inherent proximity suggested by the phenomenological evidence between affectivity and ethics, Levinas does not turn to a theory of the passions to account for how the Other is revealed as the source of normativity. Rather, the encounter with the Other by the self is characterized in terms of language. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes that "*the being of signification consists in putting into question in an ethical relation constitutive freedom itself*. Meaning is the

face of the Other, and all recourse to words takes place already within the primordial face to face of language."[243] Signification occurs within language, referring to the pointing-toward-something out to the Other, who has from the beginning given rise to meaningfulness. That anything is meaningful at all, that it need be ostended, is the result of the Other who I encounter in language. This role of language is clarified and give greater prominence in *Otherwise than Being*; "[t]he subject in saying approaches a neighbor in expressing itself, in being expelled….The subject of saying does not give signs, it becomes a sign, turns into an allegiance."[244] The ethical relation occurs through language, where the self relates to the Other on the basis of the Other calling the self to speak in saying to the Other. By 'saying,' Levinas refers to the relation of the self itself to the Other. The self, as soon as it addresses the Other, is a sign, a pointing-toward and for the Other. Through language, the Other pulls the self outside of itself in a saying where the self surrenders itself to its responsibility for the Other. The sameness of the self is able to encounter the alterity of the Other through language for Levinas.

Though as a description of the lived experience of the ethical relation this appeal to language seems to me to be correct and an even perhaps revolutionary discovery, I must challenge the primacy of language as such that Levinas has sought to establish. For to have a language at all seems to imply that the self has encountered, has received, an Other; the self has been affected by the Other. This would suggest that the self feels and is impassioned by the Other in its own capacity for language and saying. In saying, one is moved toward and moves toward the Other, suggesting the place of desire, of the heart. To have language in the first place would be a passion for the Other. Were one to simply

---

[243] TI, 206.
[244] OtB, 48-49.

stop at language without further phenomenological analysis, how language comes to be in both the self and the Other, how a saying is possible, is not apparent. There would remain a chasm between self and Other preventing any ethical relation in the absence of an investigation of the heart and affectivity.

Yet not only does Levinas not turn to affectivity, he goes so far as to denigrate passions through placing them on the side of egoism. Though he often employs passionate vocabulary, he remains suspicious of passions insofar as at its core it might constitute a return to the self that is blind to the Other and accordingly at best ethically irrelevant or at worst an unethical violence to the Other. This suspicion toward the heart is the first way in which Levinas remains conceptually haunted by Deep Kantianism, problematizing Levinas' attempt to establish a phenomenological ethics. To this haunting through the hostility toward affectivity, let us now turn in the following section.

The Denigration of Affectivity

Levinas indicates his aversion to affectivity in *Totality and Infinity* when he associates it with egoism. In particular, he writes that "enjoyment" "is the very egoism of life."[245] Enjoyment, which has so often been associated in the history of philosophy with the heart as exemplary of pleasure and good feeling, turns out to constitute the egoist tendency of life, the tendency toward oneself. That enjoyment in particular is directed toward the self suggests that affectivity as a whole is egoist. In his description of enjoyment, Levinas writes that "[e]njoyment is not a psychological state among others, the affective tonality of empiricist psychology, but the very pulsation of the I."[246] The

---

[245] TI, 112.
[246] *Ibid.*, 113.

experience of enjoyment is not simply an affective state that is set alongside others with no determinate ranking or relation, as in empirical psychology that would seek to explain all feelings as mere states contained within a self. Enjoyment does not refer to a static thing that inheres in a particular substrate. Instead, enjoyment itself is the pulsation of the self, constituting the self as such. The self begins by existing in its enjoyment, an affectivity that is the self as such. As existing in the feeling of enjoyment, the self pulsates in this affective center. Thus, "the I is the very contraction of sentiment, the pole of a spiral whose coiling and involution is drawn by enjoyment: the focus of the curve is a part of the curve. It is precisely as a 'coiling,' as a movement toward oneself, that enjoyment comes into play."[247] The self exists in its affectivity or sentiment, which is characterized by a movement that is oriented toward oneself. In feeling, the self coils up on itself, wrapping around itself in the affections of enjoyment. The language of pulsation and coiling that Levinas employs with respect to enjoyment indicates the fundamentally felt and egoist dimension that he ascribes to affectivity, wrapped up in itself as the resting in itself. Enjoyment, as the pulsation of the self, is the self feeling itself, resting in and content with itself, returning to itself in happiness that begins and ends on its own terms, without considering any other. This indicates that enjoyment is not merely taking pleasure in something for Levinas, but is the constitutive dimension of the self. Enjoyment defines and characterizes the self, the way in which the self relates to the things and others of the world around it. In Levinas' words, "[t]he self-sufficiency of *enjoying* measures the egoism or the ipseity of the Ego and the same. Enjoyment is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution. What is termed an affective state does not have

---

[247] *Ibid.*, 118.

the dull monotony of a state, but is a vibrant exaltation in which dawns the self."[248] In its

enjoyment, the self maintains itself as self-sufficient, claiming that it has all that it needs

to live within and from itself. *Qua* affectivity, enjoyment is not an inert entity, quality, or

thing among various things. It is the movement into the self itself, a feeling where the

self first feels itself in resting in itself and that thereby exalts the self. Enjoyment

constitutes the very exaltation of the self, which exists precisely as this exaltation. The

origin of the self is its enjoyable feeling of itself. Feeling itself and returning to itself is

what makes the self itself, the order of the ego.

This order of enjoyment and affectivity is the order of the self that is separated

from all ontological ramifications. The "personality of the person…is the particularity of

the happiness of enjoyment. Enjoyment accomplishes the atheist separation…the

existence at home with itself of an autochthonous I."[249] The person becomes herself

through enjoyment, which makes her herself. As constituted by the order of affective

enjoyment, the self is separated from all others by existing within its feelings of itself.

This separation is atheistic not in the sense of rejection some definite notion of God or

gods, but in denying that the self needs to appeal to any cause outside of itself for it to be

itself. The self comes into itself by itself, without having been dependent on the alterity

of a god. It rules itself and its order of affective enjoyment that emerges in enjoying its

return to itself. Feeling, in returning to itself, is not the result of Being. That is, "the

interiorization of enjoyment" "also an exaltation," is one in which the self "is

'autonomous' with respect to being; it designates not a participation in being, but

---

[248] *Ibid*.
[249] *Ibid*., 115.

happiness."[250] The self becomes separate from Being in enjoyment, belonging to the domain of happiness, of pleasurable, warm feelings. Feeling itself exalts the self beyond Being, granting it status as separate from Being, as providing its own law of desire independently of the structure of existence. The self, though it might still be a being, is not concerned with its being, existence, or ground, in affectivity, a point that will be developed later in this section. I will return momentarily to this separation of the affective from the ontological; but prior to this, the structure of the movement of affectivity, what actually occurs in a return to oneself, must be established.

In its return to the self, the structure of enjoyment is the assimilation of the Other, a structure that Levinas makes clear when he states that "the essence of enjoyment" is "[n]ourishment...the transmutation of the other into the same."[251] Enjoyment is the process of nourishment, in which the self is sustained by converting what is other into itself, reducing the other to the same. The self enjoys turning the other into itself, resting in the destruction of the other for the sake of its own exaltation. What is other no longer remains in the nourishment that sustains the sameness of the self. Nourishment occurs when "an energy that is other…becomes, in enjoyment, my own energy, my strength, me."[252] In enjoyment, there is no place for the other. Enjoyment is not of the other, but of the act of reducing the other to the same; there is only enjoyment when the other is encountered on the self's own terms, in relation to the self. As purely in relation to the self, the Other is no longer other, having been collapsed into the same, confined to being

---

[250] *Ibid.*, 119.
[251] *Ibid.*, 111.
[252] *Ibid.*

163

converted into what sustains the self. The Other is destroyed in my having forced her to become myself alone.

Though this analysis would seem to grant an ontological status to enjoyment in particular and affectivity in general by founding the experience of enjoyment in nourishment, in a relation of the same to the other in which the same annihilates the other, Levinas as I have already alluded to rejects any ontological overtones of affectivity. He writes, "[t]he life that I earn is not a *bare* existence; it is a life of labor and nourishments; these are contents which do not preoccupy it only, but which 'occupy' it, which 'entertain' it, of which it is enjoyment."[253] Levinas places the emphasis on the word bare, suggesting that he is moving beyond ontological considerations in his discussion of nourishment. This is further clarified by a passage from Time and the Other, where Levinas writes that "[t]he uttermost finality of eating is contained in food. When one smells a flower, it is the smell that limits the finality of the act. To stroll is enjoy the fresh air, not for health but for the air."[254] In the affairs of life, I am focused not on how these things might grant that I remain in existence, instead I am directed toward the enjoyment, the pleasure, that I feel when I engage with these affairs. I rest in the contents of life for the sake of the pleasure that they bring to me. To live is to be occupied with the things of life, which one enjoys simply so that one can feel the enjoyment of them, rather than for the sake of continued existence. The separation of the self from Being is confirmed by the following substantial discussion from *Totality and Infinity*:

> The bare fact of life is never bare. Life is not the naked will to be, an ontological
> *Sorge* for this life. Life's relation with the very conditions of its life becomes the

---

[253] *Ibid*.
[254] *Time and the Other*, 63.

nourishment and content of that life. Life is *love of life*, a relation with contents that are not my being but more dear than my being: thinking, eating, sleeping, reading, working, warming oneself in the sun. Distinct from my substance but constituting it, these contents make up the worth of my life. When reduced to pure and naked existence, like the existence of the shades Ulysses visits in Hades, life dissolves into a shadow.[255]

This passage stands most immediately as response to Heidegger's fundamental ontology, as a profound commentary on the ancient question of the relation between goodness and being, and ultimately as an attempt to understand what is most meaningful in life. I will address these significant implications in order, beginning with the first and working toward the last.

Levinas explicitly rejects the Heideggerian notion of care as care for Being.[256] The care or attention, the movement of life as such is not aimed at Being itself. Even if there is some sort of care for Being, this care is not the primary orientation that guides and motivates life. Life is not in the first place interested in whether it is, in whether it exists, but in the feeling itself that it exists, in the feeling of truly living, of doing the things that make one feel genuinely alive, such as eating and feeling the warmth of the sun. Only with these contents can Being become anything more than an abstraction, implying that Being itself is not these contents and in itself lacks them. Levinas interprets Heidegger's Being as inherently bare. Being itself, in Levinas' reading of Heidegger, is mere Being, the mere fact of existence itself, lacking a relation to goodness, affectivity, or any of the felt contents of life. These contents are something other than the fact of Being, preventing them from being contained within Being. The person cares for these contents and the joy that they give to her, irrespective of the ontological character

---

[255] TI, 112.
[256] This does seem to be a problematic reading of Heidegger's understanding of Being, though this discussion would carry us beyond the scope of what is presently at issue.

of these contents. Further, the good and affectivity are not grounded in Being insofar as they would have to be added on to the fact of Being, which does not itself entail any claims in relation to the good or feeling.

This bareness of Being and its divorce from the good by denying the old claim of the convertibility of Being and the good therein affirms the thesis of Deep Kantianism that there is an abyssal chasm between nature and freedom, Being and goodness. Goodness is thus not found in Being at even the most basic level for Levinas, for whom the good things of life, eating, sleeping, reading, in short all the joys of life, are not within the sphere of Being. This is hardly Levinas' definitive statement about what constitutes the good itself, but it is sufficient to make clear that goods themselves—the particular things that one enjoys during the days of one's life—do not belong, insofar as they are good, to the sphere of Being. Even good, joyous things are not of Being. Though these good things are for Levinas in no way what actually constitutes the Good, their separation from being phenomenologically indicates just how much Levinas is resisting the thesis that desire and affectivity finds the good or any good in Being or beings. The self does not seek Being as the goal of life. What motivates life is the enjoyment itself of being alive, without which existence itself would simply not have worth. A life deprived of all joys yet that keeps one in existence would be a prison, a burden, that would be pure suffering. It would be a continuation of existence without end, condemning the self to enduring a joyless life that would seem to have no point. The point, the worth, the purpose of life at the level of enjoyment is to experience all the joys of life, not to merely be. Levinas maintains that the person desires what is other than Being; "[t]he reality of life is already on the level of happiness, and in this sense beyond ontology. Happiness is

not an accident of being, since being is risked for happiness."[257] Happiness and enjoyment belong to their own order of the egoism of the self, instead of the order of Being. Being is subordinated to egoism; that is, the ontological becomes problematic for Levinas as the result of its egoist, not its ontological, character. Through being deployed in service to the same, Being is against the ethical, and is wholly subordinated to the egoist desires of the self rather than informing these desires. Levinas thus rejects the claim, as ancient as Aristotle and Augustine, that the person desires most of all to be, that the person finds Being itself to be the good. The desire or concern for one's Being is not the fundamental desire of the person, who desires her own enjoyments of life, not as existing but as joyous. She is concerned with the satisfaction of her own desires as pleasurable desires, not as what better establishes her in Being. If the term good could at all be used here, the egoist self maintains that the good is pleasure and enjoyment.

Phenomenologically, the observation that bare existence is not enough is at a certain level correct; for a life that was devoid of joy would indeed seem to be endless torture. One does not seek to be simply to be, but to be for the sake of the things, events, and others that occupy the time of one's existence, those events that constitute daily life itself. Being is for the sake of something else, not for its own sake. To have Being, but to have this Being without the contents of Being, to be but without joy, has no meaning. The person desires more than Being. She desires what is other than Being. An existence without the joys of life would be entirely empty and purposeless, with nothing to motivate it. Alone, Being does not provide worth. Life requires more than Being. After all, why do I wish to be in the first place? The old answer that I wish to be for the sake of

---

[257] *Ibid*.

Being since Being is the Good does not formulate an adequate response to this question; for what makes Being the Good? How can Being as such be the Good, the end of existence, when it is simply bare Being? What is the purpose and worth of existing? Rightfully, Levinas is pushing on why one should exist at all, attempting to provide a ground for the meaningfulness of life, which must come from a source that is not simply Being as such.

However, what Levinas' misses in his phenomenological analysis of the relation of enjoyment to Being is that he assumes, with Kant and Hume, yet against Heidegger, that Being is bare, that Being is simply the bare fact of existence upon which is subsequently added the joys and contents of life. That the joys and contents of life might be originarily grounded in Being is from the beginning excluded by Levinas. Without adequate phenomenological investigation, the possibility of an inherent jointure between Being and goodness is denied. This denial occurs against the given evidence that the person seems to seek food, drink, and sleep, not as joys in themselves, but insofar as these sustain life; precisely because these activities have a relation to the ontological in the first place are they a source of joy. Pleasure and agreeable feelings are experienced as the consequence of what advances and strengthens one's existence. One feels pleasure as the response to what sustains one's existence. Even if one desires to exist so that one might have pleasure, this would remain the pleasure and good of existence, of being able to experience pleasures that sustain one's very existence where precisely because they support one's Being are experienced as pleasurable at all. Pleasure and ultimately enjoyment must be grounded in existence itself, against Levinas' Kantian prejudice that pleasure is divorced from Being. This suggests that the relation between existence and

the joys of life, between existence and the desirable or good, is far more intertwined than Levinas lets on. Though Levinas may very well be correct that Being alone is not the source of why life is worthy and meaningful, he does not address the possibility that what is needed is a new conception of Being where Being might be constituted by the alterity of the Other not as the opposition to Being but as the consummation and core of Being. At this point, however, there is insufficient space to develop the unity of goodness and Being through affective, passionate experience. Later, rooted in phenomenological evidence, I will show how affectivity reveals both ontological and ethical situations in Chapter Six on Heidegger and affectivity and Chapter Seven on the originary passionate jointure between the Good and Being.[258]

       That Levinas' claim that enjoyment is inherently egoist can be extended to his overall interpretation of the structure of affectivity becomes clear when he writes in *Totality and Infinity* that "sensibility" "is the mode of enjoyment."[259] Enjoyment occurs in sensibility, in immediate contact with the world. This contact is not through the order of knowledge or representation, but through that in which the world pours into the self that absorbs this world. In Levinas' own words, "[t]he sensibility we are describing starting with enjoyment of the element does not belong to the order of thought but to that of sentiment, that is, the affectivity wherein the egoism of the I pulsates. One does not know, one lives sensible qualities: the green of these leaves, the red of this sunset."[260]

---

[258] This question of the status of Being, and thus also the question of the status of nothingness, is a crucial point of contact between Levinas' and Kant's ethics, one in which Levinas follows Kant by depriving Being of ethical implications. To this question of Being and nothingness in Levinas, I will turn in the next chapter. Yet before the question of Being, nothingness, and the relation of the ontological to the ethical can be examined, the absence of ethical implications from an affective encounter with ontological situations must continue to be clarified in what remains of the current chapter.

[259] *Ibid.*, 135.

[260] *Ibid.*

For Levinas, just as for Kant, there are two orders of human powers, divided between the thinking that knows and the sensibility that feels. The sensible is lived insofar as it is felt. This feeling is not, however, an intentional affectivity as suggested by Scheler, but a blind contact with what is other. Here, feeling becomes itself in the physicality of sensing the material world. That is, sensibility, as an encounter with the elemental, is on the side of materiality. For the "earth upon which I find myself and from which I welcome sensible objects or make my way to them suffices for me."[261] Sensibility, as opposed to thinking, is fundamentally corporeal. It is enmeshed in materiality, in the experience of the physical world that is characterized by elemental depth. That is, "[t]he sensible being" is "the body."[262] For Levinas, in contrast to Scheler, there is no domain of affectivity, of the heart, that is distinct from bodily sensibility and mental thinking. Levinas sustains the ancient prejudice against the heart, reducing human feeling to the domain of the material sensible. By sustaining this prejudice, Levinas returns to Kant, rejecting the discovery of Scheler that I discussed in the previous chapters that might help to overcome Deep Kantianism in ethics. As belonging to the body, sensibility is consequently blind. Levinas states that "[s]ensibility does not aim at an object, however rudimentary," and should "not be confused with still vacillating forms of 'consciousness of.'"[263] Sensibility, or affectivity, since these terms are interchangeable for Levinas, insofar as it is corporeal is never intentional. Affectivity does not reveal anything about the world or its entities; the persons, things, and events of the world are not disclosed by feeling. It is not revelatory of ontological situations. Further, since this affectivity is the

[261] *Ibid.*, 137.
[262] *Ibid.*, 136.
[263] *Ibid.*, 137.

exaltation of the self, and remains wholly within the self as the self's assimilation of alterity, it is not ethically informative. Isolated from both the existents of the world and the goodness of the Other, affectivity as sensibility lacks any indicative role. Affectivity does not move the self outside of itself in a movement of exteriorization, but locks the self in a perpetual motion that returns to the glorified self. As such, affectivity can never be the place for the reception of the good or the Other for Levinas, for whom there is no affective ecstasy; love, desire, passion, do not tend beyond themselves. From his perspective, any theory of the passions that attempted to grant the heart a revelatory role that transposes the self outside of itself would be ignoring the egoist movement of affect, neglecting that the affect is fundamentally my affect, and as mine returns fully to myself. Enjoyment, passion, affectivity all signify the egoism of the self that in its striving and feeling attempts to violate the Other. Just as for Kant, all affectivity is egoist, an egoist nature without relation to anything else, for Levinas all enjoyment is an egoist exaltation of the same to the exclusion of the goodness of responsibility for the Other. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant maintains that "[a]ll the inclinations together (…the satisfaction of which is then called one's own happiness) constitute regard for oneself (solipsismus)."[264] As I have argued in this chapter, Levinas agrees with Kant on this point. In both of their ethics, they assume that inclinations, feelings, emotions, affections, enjoyment—in short, the whole sphere of the heart—are all only concerned with the self without relation to anything beyond the self. The affective is the place for the self in its egoism, a self that exists in feeling the pulsation of its own exaltation.

---

[264] CPrV, 5: 73.

Affectivity, as the coiling, pulsating return to the self in its corporeality, a non-intentional, egoist, corporeal affectivity, is first conceived of by Levinas, 14 years prior to *Totality and Infinity*, in *Existence and Existents* (1947), where he argues that in "in desiring I am not concerned with being but am absorbed with the desirable, with an object that will completely slake my desire;" moreover, "it is not really true that to say that we eat in order to live; we eat because we are hungry. Desire has no further intentions behind it."[265] This usage of the term desire is clearly distinct from the later metaphysical desire that Levinas will discuss in *Totality and Infinity*. The metaphysical desire of the 1961 work can never be satisfied, and only ever increases; it has no object or end, constituting an infinite desire for the Other.[266] In the earlier *Existence and Existents*, Levinas is discussing another desire that is the precursor to the enjoyment of *Totality and Infinity*. This desire, like enjoyment, does not strive after Being, instead motivated by the desire for the pleasure of the desirable. Eating, drinking, sleeping, which might according to different, Pre-Kantian accounts be described as the for the sake of sustaining one's existence, are for themselves.[267] One rests in the desire of hunger, which as hunger and the pleasure of eating are an end in themselves. There is no further aim, ontological or ethical, beyond hunger and desire more broadly. In this sense, desire is the desire for desire, the desire to continue to live in hunger so that one might experience the enjoyment of the eating that sates hunger. Affectivity is barren of ontological ramifications,

---

[265] *Ibid.*, 28.
[266] Cf. TI, 50.
[267] Most explicitly Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics 10.4-10.5 has maintained that pleasure is what completes an activity, as what is felt upon the completion of an activity; for instance, when one eats food, one feels pleasure in one's full stomach. Thus, pleasure in Aristotle is what Frank Scalambrino has called "the supervening indication of completion" (Scalambrino 2016, 57). This view of pleasure as being indicative of an ontological situation also, though not as well-known, can be found significantly in the writings of Augustine, which will become relevant in the final chapter of this study.

meaning that it does not disclose one's disposition, how one stands, with respect to the things, others, and situations of existence. It points to nothing else. Affectivity only shows at most that one stands in oneself in feeling. Beginning with *Existence and Existents*, affectivity belongs to its own order of sensibility, the pulsating exaltation of the self. The self exists in its sensible affectivity, meaning that affectivity is the place for the egoism of the self that resists the ethical relation to the good. Affectivity is egoism itself for Levinas, suggesting that the ethical life is the one that would necessarily ignore the affective sphere of the heart if it is to be receptive to its responsibility to the Other.

    Existence and Existents also portrays another theory of affectivity, an intentional affectivity that though it mostly disappears by 1961, belongs to the self in its thinking and conceptualization, rather than its pulsating sensibility, and thus requires attention in my account here that seeks to find the place of affectivity for Levinas in his ethics. In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas criticizes affectivity as interpreted by Heidegger, who Levinas accuses of making affectivity simply another mode of egoist comprehension. Here, Levinas by responding to Heidegger recognizes a higher affectivity identified with the intentional consciousness of the mind that is thus not blind. Levinas writes, "in the perspective of the *cogito*…will and feeling have been considered from Descartes to Heidegger. One always looked for their object, the *cogitatum*; they were analyzed as acts of apprehension."[268] Heidegger, according to Levinas, views affectivity as having an intentional object. Similar to intentional consciousness, there is an affectivity that takes an intentional object. Feeling is always feeling of…, passion for…, in the pattern of consciousness of…. Intentional affectivity is on the side of the rational mind and

---

[268] *Existence and Existents*, 105.

thinking for Levinas. Just as thinking grasps its objects, bringing them into itself, affectivity in taking an intentional object grasps this object, comprehending it, collapsing it into the same. As affectivity *qua* intentionality, feeling belongs to the mind in the divide between sensibility and thinking. For "[s]ense is permeability for the mind, and already characterizes what we call sensation. Or, we can say, it is luminosity."[269] In 1947, sensation is permeated by the mind. There is no aspect of the self that escapes from the power of reason. There would therefore seem to be two possible types of affectivity for Levinas, the first as intentional, belonging to representational thinking, and the second as pure enjoyment, belonging to corporeal sensibility.

Levinas associates the intentional theory of affectivity with egoism in *Existence and Existents* when he states that "anxiety, in Heidegger, brings about 'being toward death,' grasped and somehow understood."[270] Though anxiety is aimed at the nothing, it still remains intentionally directed toward the nothing. Anxiety is indicated as anxiety precisely insofar as it reveals the nothing itself. It is the disclosure of the nothingness of Dasein, of Dasein's being-toward-death, the lack of ground or self-sufficiency. Anxiety is ontologically informative, manifesting the situation of the null basis of Dasein. Yet by revealing the nothing, anxiety grasps the nothing, a movement of comprehension in which the self reaches out toward the nothing and brings this nihility into the domain of theory and conceptualization.[271] The nothing, according to Levinas' reading of Heidegger, returns through anxiety to the same. Intentional affectivity, even in the

---

[269] Ibid., 40.
[270] Ibid., 58.
[271] As will be seen in the following chapter, this is part of why Levinas claims that Being pervades every domain of nothingness.

174

anxious feeling of nothingness, once again appears to be simply another mode of the egoist return to the self in comprehending both everything and nothing into the same.

The suspicion toward affective intentionality is further broadened beyond Heidegger by Levinas when he argues that "the phenomenological analyses [of affectivity]…keep something of the character of comprehension, and consequently of apprehension, in emotions (Heidegger), and speak of emotional experience and of objects clothed with new properties (Husserl, Scheler)."[272] Heidegger, in his intentional affectivity, brings things, Being, and nothingness into the sameness of egoist comprehension, allowing for the ontological introduction of Being by the self to ensure the lordship of the self. Though Husserl and Scheler do not, in Levinas' view, give affectivity an ontologically revelatory role, they nonetheless still grant affectivity a revelatory role as being of "objects" with "new properties." By this turn of phrase, Levinas refers to, among others, Scheler's ethical values, which as we have seen in Chapters Two and Three are encountered solely through the affective heart. Only in feeling is ethics possible for Scheler. Yet, since these values that Scheler claims are revealed in affectivity are according to Levinas still known by the self, still experienced, then these values themselves are comprehended. The new objects that are values that Scheler supposedly discovers have no place for alterity in having already been grasped by the self, subject to conceptualization. Since the heart as intentional for Levinas falls on the side of thinking and thematization, Scheler's ethically informative affective intentionality is equally egoist as Heidegger's ontologically revelatory affective intentionality. Both intentional affectivities grant priority to the knowing self, enabling

---

[272] EE, 68.

the self to totalize the Other into an existential analytic of Being or a hierarchy of values. A revelatory heart that is open to value is simply another way of knowing for Levinas, simply another means to promote the absolute sameness of the self.

However, this intentional, comprehending affectivity for Levinas is subsequent to the non-intentional affectivity that becomes the enjoyment (*jouissance*) of *Totality and Infinity*. Whereas the intentional affectivity of theory is commanded by the self, non-intentional affectivity as "[e]motion is what overwhelms."[273] This affectivity is a pre-intentional affectivity that allows for later intentional affectivity at all. There is for Levinas in lived experience an affective intentionality, confirmed in *Existence and Existents* when he claims that "we believe that the phenomena of light and clarity, and of freedom which is at one with them, dominate will and feeling."[274] These feelings "could be, to a degree rightly, taken by Descartes and Malebranche as 'obscure thoughts,' as 'information,' about the exterior which affects our body."[275] However, this intentional affectivity that Levinas admits exists is derivative; it is preceded by the non-intentional affectivity of enjoyment that constitutes the self as such. The self exists in the pulsation of affective pleasure and happiness, its coiling back upon itself. This is the original constitution of the self. After having been brought into existence by this non-intentional affectivity, the self is then able later to engage in the movement of comprehension, where it uses the power of the thematization and conceptualization of the mind to grasp the world around it. At this point, the self deploys an intentional affectivity that is permeated

---

[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid., 104-105.
[275] Ibid., 105.

by theory, subsequent to non- and pre-intentional affectivity. Enjoyment, *jouissance*, is prior to other, secondary variations of affectivity.

Affectivity thus in both of its forms turns out for Levinas to be problematic; in its first non-intentional type as characterized as the enjoyment of sensibility, passions constitute a blind return to the self, the pure exaltation of the egoist self without knowledge; in its second intentional variation, when affectivity might no longer be blind, it is theoretical comprehension insofar as in it the self seeks to grasp the other and reduce such alterity to the self. Intentional affectivity is the place of the self's comprehension that results in the position of ontology and Being to ensure its domination of alterity. Affectivity, regardless of whether it is intentional or not, remains egoist throughout Levinas' writings. In *Existence and Existents*, there appears a corporeal non-intentional affectivity that is then further developed in *Totality and Infinity* and appears in a similar capacity in *Otherwise than Being*. This non-intentional affectivity seems to hold greater significance for Levinas in his understanding of affectivity given that it continues to be developed in later works, while the intentional affectivity that appears alongside it in *Existence and Existents* most disappears in later works. This silence on intentional affectivity seems to me to largely be the result of constitutive and primal role played by pre- and non-intentional sensible affectivity, by what will be called enjoyment, including in Otherwise than Being. In this text, Levinas once more claims that "enjoying is an enjoying of enjoyment," the "singularization of an ego in its coiling back upon itself. Winding of a skein, it is the very movement of egoism."[276] These remarks sound as if they were made in *Totality and Infinity*, though they date from 1974. Enjoyment enjoys

---

[276] *Otherwise than Being*, 73.

itself, turning back upon itself to the exclusion of the Other, a return that constitutes the

self as such, resting in its pleasurable feelings. The self maintains itself in its happiness.

Ethics, as the demand that the Other imposes upon the self, interrupting the self's

enjoyment, is thus a "[p]ain [that] penetrates into the very heart of the for-oneself that

beats in enjoyment."[277] Affectivity is opposed to the ethical life, to the relation to the

Other, which is painful in that it prevents the self from continuing to enjoy itself. When

confronted by its responsibility, the self must leave behind its happiness, going out from

itself in a traumatism. To be for the Other wounds the self, who is thereby condemned by

the good to living a life in spite of its passions. It must, like Kant's autonomous self that

"tears himself out of this deadly insensibility and does the action without any inclination,

simply from duty" reject its affectivity, which since it can never serve as the source of

normativity is at best a distraction from the good and at worst a compulsion to do evil by

rejecting responsibility in the act of enjoying the assimilation of the Other.[278] This latter

course, the worst option, seems to be favored by Levinas, in that the ethical relation itself

is pain and wounding. I must divest myself of my feelings if I am to respond to the Other

and must especially divest myself of my happy, pleasurable passions; if I do not so

silence my affectivity, I will remain in my egoist enjoyment of myself, blind to the calls

of the destitute Other. In effect, I would be evil.

However, is Levinas' interpretation of affectivity really as bleak as I have thus far

suggested? After all, eros in *Totality and Infinity* combines aspects of metaphysical

desire for the Other with egoist enjoyment. Raoul Moati observes in *Levinas and the

Night of Being*, his commentary on *Totality and Infinity*, that "[i]n love, the registers of

---

[277] *Ibid.*, 56.
[278] *Groundwork*, 4: 398.

178

desire and need become inextricably entangled."[279] Love is the crossing of the desire for

the Other and the need for egoist enjoyment. In *Totality and Infinity* itself, Levinas

maintains that love is the "simultaneity of need and desire," where on the one hand

"[l]ove aims at the Other; it aims at him in his frailty," seeking "to come to the assistance

of his frailty," while on the other hand, love is "love of love, voluptuosity," a

voluptuosity in which "the other is me and separated from me."[280] Voluptuosity signifies

egoist need, seeking to have the Other but as emerging from a desire that aims at the

Other, must always remain separate from the Other. Thus does the Other become me and

yet remain separate from me. Voluptuosity seeks an impossible return to the self, always

sought-after but never actually consummated, that brings into relief the character of love

that needs to have the enjoyment of the Other, an enjoyment that always slips away in the

alterity of the Other. Love by also incorporating metaphysical desire must remain in this

dynamic oscillation between seeking but never possessing the Other. Possession would

entirely reduce love to an egoism, since love would be nothing more than a need that can

be satisfied. But as genuinely arising out of metaphysical desire, love must in moving

toward the Other continue without end, impossible to satisfy; for the Other, as absolutely

other, can never be reduced to the same. Love seeks the Other in her frailty, as destitute

and needing my response, demanding that I care for her as herself. The Other remains

always exterior, always an infinite alterity. Characterizing love as both need and desire

allows Levinas to describe love properly, acknowledging the alterity of love while also

recognizing its possessive aspect that seeks to have the beloved for oneself, an effort that

though doomed to failure is a way that by arising from the desire for the Other still

---

[279] Moati 2017, 163.
[280] TI, 255, 256, 265.

retains a place for the ethical relation for the sake of the Other. Love would seem to allow Levinas to have an ethical affectivity.

However, despite its orientation toward the Other, love fundamentally ends in a return to the self. For if "to love is to love the love the Beloved bears me, to love is also to love oneself in love, and thus to return to oneself. Love does not transcend unequivocally—it is complacent, it is pleasure and dual egoism."[281] Love necessarily involves a return to oneself insofar as in love, I expect the Other to love me, and want this love that the Other gives me. I love what the Other does for me, I love that the Other in her love comes back to me. I love her not in her alterity, but insofar as she loves me and offers herself up to me. Rather than loving her as other, I love her because she is for me in her love. Only if she loves me, only if she recognizes me as worthy and good in my own right, do I love at all. Love begins with the Other as a love that comes from her to rest in myself. What matters is not that I give myself in love, but that the Other gives herself to me in love, that she exalt me for my sake. The final movement of love is for me and toward me. Thus love becomes, as Levinas says, a dual egoism; egoism is dual in there being both myself and the Other, but the Other is loved as part of myself, as part of the same. Though I can never successfully assimilate her, the consequence of which is that there are always two, I love her as my very own for my sake—dual egoism. I have grown in myself, gone out from myself in a motion that returns to myself. There are more of me, now that she loves me, for she is mine in her love for me. Love for Levinas culminates in an egoism that in its ultimate moment seeks to exclude the alterity of the Other, so that even love as such fails to recognize my ethical responsibility to the Other.

---

[281] *Ibid.*, 266.

Otherwise than Being also appears to portray affectivity in a more positive light when Levinas seems to give place to passion when he emphasizes the primordial passivity of the self. He writes that "[s]ubjectivity…comes to pass as a passivity more passive than all passivity."[282] The self exists through a passivity that is not opposed to activity, since any passivity that would be articulated in opposition to activity would take activity as at least its equal, an unending struggle in which neither passivity nor activity would be the ground of the other, both being of the same order as parts of a whole that contains them. The passivity of which Levinas speaks is prior to any juxtaposition with activity that would limit passivity to being merely another half of a dual relationship. Activity and all later passive passion would assume originary passivity. The person comes to be through having been wholly passive, without any possibility for action, receiving herself wholly from the Other. As passive, she only is herself through having been a pure openness to the Other. Action and even particular passions such as fear and joy assume both a being who might act or feel and that which is acted upon or felt. Action and passion as a duality require the reception of an object by the self; but the self to be the self requires the reception of itself, which it could never have acted upon since this reception is the condition for the self at all. This originary passivity would seem to suggest that as Levinas continues to develop his theory of affectivity, he gives a fundamental place to passion as the passivity that from the beginning opens and disposes the self to its responsibility for the Other. Does Levinas really exclude affectivity as a whole from his ethics?[283]

---

[282] *Otherwise than Being*, 14.
[283] One might also be inclined to return to the analysis of indolence and fatigue in *Existence and Existence*, where Levinas provides a thorough—perhaps to this day the most thorough—phenomenological account of these two affections. In the first, "[i]ndolence is an impotent and joyless aversion to the burden of

As I have indicated in the explication of the passages from *Totality and Infinity*,

love—though a crossing between egoist need and metaphysical desire—still seems to

returns to the self despite its effort to preserve the alterity of the Other; further, in the

passivity of *Otherwise than Being* that is passively passionate, the place of affectivity in

Levinas seems to not yet have been properly determined. One could perhaps argue that

Levinas does retain an openness to affectivity. Only in the series of interviews contained

in *Is it Righteous to Be?* does Levinas provide what is arguably his most definitive

clarification of the structure of love and affectivity. On the surface of these interviews,

Levinas makes a statement that appears to be in favor of the importance of affectivity for

the ethical. He states, in a 1986 interview with Francois Poirie, that "human emotion and

its spirituality begin in the for-the-other, in being affected by the other. The great event

and the very source of its affectivity is in the other! In all feeling my relation to the other

---

existence itself" (17), and in the second, fatigue is "to be weary of being" (24). However, both indolence and fatigue, though affections that at first glance appear to be revealing something about Being, are not revealing anything at all; they are not of the order of intentional affectivity. They are non-intentional, belonging to corporeal sensibility. In the experience of indolence or fatigue, one does not grasp a concept or object, but feels "a stiffening, a numbness, a way of curling up into oneself" (18) when one is confronted by Being as "essentially alien and strikes against us. We undergo its suffocating embrace like the night, but it does not respond to us. There is a pain in Being" (9). The self immediately feels itself as oppressed by the foreign weight of Being that it does not want, for it is trapped by Being. It must continue to exist, to bear the burden of acting and exerting effort within Being, though it does not want to suffer through this burden any longer. This is admittedly a powerful way to interpret indolence and fatigue, but this interpretation does not actually grant affectivity an ontologically disclosive place. For the self in indolence and fatigue is feeling itself, experience its own resistance to Being. In encountering Being as a 'night,' it is not encountering any particular content beyond itself or even about its disposition. These two affections do not operate for Levinas as somehow ontologically indicative. They do not reveal the structure of existence, instead only speaking to the self's interior feeling of its burden of its Being. The self is wrapped up in its own self, isolated from any knowledge or revelation of Being. Further, as articulated by Levinas here, indolence and fatigue are especially not ethically indicative; the feeling of indolence or fatigue says nothing about how I am to respond to the Other, on an ontological basis or otherwise. Ethics cannot be grounded in these affections irrespective of their relation to Being. If anything, indolence and fatigue separate the self even further from the Other by trapping the self in its own conceit for how it is to endure its unwanted burden of having to continue to be. The self is interested in its own problems, its own sufferings, its own feelings that exclude the Other. Consequently, indolence and fatigue seem to me to be unable to provide any support for a Levinas who is more sympathetic toward affectivity.

intervenes."[284] Affectivity is the passion that receives the Other, the Other in me. The self only feels through openness to the Other, who thus becomes the condition for the possibility of affectivity. All affectivity depends upon being given to me by and from the Other, suggesting that affectivity still has a place within the ethical sphere. If it comes from the Other, could affectivity not be the revelation of the Other to me, how the Other manifests herself to me?

However, Levinas begins to undermine this reading that would grant ethical status to affectivity when he distinguishes between the Other and affectivity as such; in the same 1986 interview, Levinas states that "[e]thics: a comportment in which the other, who is strange and indifferent to you, who belongs neither to the order of your interest nor to your affections, at the same time matters to you."[285] The Other does not belong to my affections, which constitute a distinct sphere that is separate from the Other. The affections of the self do not contain an intrinsic relation to the Other that would reveal and indicate the ethically significance of the Other to the self. The affective is not the space in myself for the Other. Once more, as in *Totality and Infinity*, there seems to be a tension at the core of affectivity, which both begins as a mode of the Other and yet finally breaks with the Other.

Contained in the other interviews of *Is it Righteous to Be?*, Levinas provides guiding principle regarding affectivity and love that begins to resolve the apparent tension in affectivity by positing two dual characteristics—the ethical and the passionate—that are of different rank in which there is a definite order of priority and worth, where first rank is granted to the ethical. In the interview "Philosophy, Justice,

---

[284] *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 53.
[285] *Ibid*., 48.

183

and Love" from 1983, Levinas states: "love without eros, charity, love in which the ethical aspect dominates the passionate aspect, love without concupiscence. I don't very much like the word love, which is worn out and debased. Let us speak instead of the taking upon oneself of the fate of the other."[286] The word love as such is problematic, since it carries with it connotations of eros and passion. One loves, one feels, one feels in oneself. But insofar as love is the affective pulsation of the self, it remains wholly egoist. The love that Levinas praises is one in which passion is subject to the ethical, in which love as a feeling is denigrated in favor of love as being for the Other. Passion is distinct from ethical responsibility, and must be subsumed under the demands that responsibility imposes upon the self. As distinct from responsibility, affectivity is not indicative of the good, suggesting that affectivity must be brought into line with the obligations imposed by normativity.

This phrase 'love without concupiscence' Levinas takes in particular as his guide to affectivity, since it contains the distinction between the two sides of affective experience, the ethical dimension for the Other and the passionate dimension for the self. He acknowledges the origins of this guiding distinction in Pascal in other interviews contained in *Is it Righteous to Be?* The three passages that most exemplify this guiding principle and its implications are the following:

> I think that responsibility is the love without concupiscence of which Pascal spoke: to respond to the other, to approach the other as unique, isolated from all multiplicity and outside collective necessities. To approach someone as unique to the world is to love him. Affective warmth, feeling, and goodness constitute the proper mode of this approach to the unique, the thinking of the unique. ("The Vocation of the Other," 1988).[287]

---

[286] *Ibid.*, 165.
[287] *Ibid.*, 108.

> [W]hat is truly human is—and don't be afraid of this word—love. And I mean it even with everything that burdens love or, I could say it better, responsibility. And responsibility is actually love, as Pascal said, 'without concupiscence'….Love, or responsibility. ("Intention, Event, and the Other," 1989).[288]

> This responsibility for the other is the grounding moment of love. It is not really a state of mind; it is not a sentiment, but rather an obligation. The human is first of all obligation. Every feeling, every state of mind, presupposes a being-hostage! It is a mistake to think that this responsibility would be no burden, but it is not only a burden. It is frequently asked: how could Kant consider love an obligation? In the presence of the face of the other, love is obligation. ("Being-toward-Death and Thou Shalt Not Kill," 1986).[289]

These passages show that Levinas' central attitude toward affectivity and love is that they are proper only when the movement toward oneself, when any return to the self, is completely subordinated and made subservient to the demands of the ethical. The condition for good love is that affectivity be given second place. Love is only good when it is divested of passion and feeling. Affectivity is given such a low status that it must be denigrated to the extent that genuine love *qua* love is better understood as responsibility or obligation. Levinas not only makes love and responsibility equivalent, but also maintains that that to which he refers by the word *love* is better designated by *responsibility*, an obligation that excludes sentiment. Feeling does not belong to the good love, which is no longer love in the traditional sense of the word, signifying rather the demands themselves that the Other imposes upon me. Levinas has here explicitly followed Kant in identifying love as obligation, separating and rejecting the affective dimension of love as at best morally irrelevant and at worst morally evil. Love is not a feeling; what matters about love is that it be for the Other, responding to the call of the Other. The term love, according to Levinas, should be altogether replaced by the term

---

[288] *Ibid.*, 143.
[289] *Ibid.*, 133-134.

responsibility, showing that in the final account, Levinas rejects affectivity even in the mode of love for the Other, for love is better called responsibility. In no way can love as feeling reveal the good to the self. Even when Levinas speaks of love as including an affective warmth and feeling in the first quote above, he places this love within the framework of being without concupiscence, without a return to the self, a pure response to the Other. The pure openness to the Other mandates that there be no motion that would come back to the self, since any such motion would reduce the Other to the same. This would be a strange notion of love that would prohibit one's own feeling. Responsibility for the Other must be a complete denial of the self, whose feelings have worth on the sole condition that they are derivative from and ordered to the Other. Feelings are only allowed to enter into responsibility if they are entirely subsequent to and subsumed under the relation between the self and the Other, which as such is not an affective relation, not a loving relation. The relation between self and Other is supposed to be one in which the responsibility for the Other arises prior to and independent of any affective feeling that does not contain this responsibility to the Other. Responsibility can never be the affective jointure between self and Other, but is something distinct from this affectivity. For responsibility is obligation itself, not love. Affectivity presupposes obligation, the response to the Other, a response that can never be for Levinas characterized by passionate love. Levinas goes so far as to criticize passionate, romantic love when in *Existence and Existents* he writes that "[t]here is also the ridiculous and tragic simulation of devouring in kissing and love-bites. It is as though one had made a mistake about the nature of one's desire and had confused it with hunger."[290] Romantic

---

[290] EE, 35.

love between persons amounts to an egoist assimilation of the Other into the same, where one desires the Other as one's own, rather than as Other, In both passionate love and hunger, one seeks to consume the Other, to convert her into oneself. The paradigm of romantic love is far closer to that of hunger than that of ethical responsibility. Levinas has denigrated the romantic, felt dimension of love and affectivity in favor of an emotionless responsibility and obligation that must reject all passions if it is to be ethical. Passion and affectivity is the return to the self, without regard for the Other.

Within this context, all feelings, all states-of-mind, moods, dispositions, emotions, and passions require a previous responsibility that obligates the self to the Other. Passion comes late, love comes late. First, there is the obligation that itself as without feeling is the actual meaning of love. True love does not feel. The relation of ethical responsibility for the Other is not an affective relation. Feeling does not constitute the relation between self and Other, meaning that the good who is the Other is never disclosed or communicated by affectivity. Affectivity is always too late, always arriving after the call of the Other to a responsibility that breaks my heart and deadens my love. Ethics and affectivity do not mix, resulting in Levinas being haunted by Deep Kantianism, by the dismissal of affectivity from an ethically indicative place. Just as for Kant the good will can never consider the inclinations and objects of the will, Levinas rejects any affectivity or love that would motivate the self through feeling. Only cold, harsh obligation may motivate the self, for whom the good life consists in the rejection of enjoyment, for choosing the Other at the expense of the self. The good life requires a suffering self that acts out of dutiful obligation against its evil passions. That love must be without passion, must become pure responsibility, is Levinas' final word regarding affectivity is further

187

supported by the date of the interviews from *Is it Righteous to Be?*, which come from the middle to late 1980s toward the end of Levinas' career. When looking back upon the path of affectivity in his thought, Levinas summarizes this path in terms of love without passion, love without concupiscence, in terms of a denial of the heart. Only pure response to the Good of the Other, obligation, is acceptable. I must abandon my passion, which by locking me in my own egoism fail to acknowledge the priority of alterity over myself. For both Levinas and Kant, all passion is egoism.

By confirming the egoism of the self, affectivity turns out to be blind to the imperatives of ethics. Both Being and the Good vanish in feeling for Levinas, for whom not only can there be no appeal to passions as grounding the sources of normativity, but also, especially in *Totality and Infinity*, for whom affectivity has appeared to have been divorced from Being. Affectivity as not being ontologically disclosive is not rooted in Being. Most significantly, the self is not motivated by the desire to be; Being is of secondary importance. Being is denigrated, and divorced from the good that is itself beyond Being. Ethics is, as this chapter began, first philosophy for Levinas, against ontology. The good is against Being. Yet this opposition to Being means that Being is divorced from the good, that the good is never to be located in Being. Levinas has made Being bare by prioritizing ethics over ontology, so that ethics and ontology must be thought separately. Ethics must be before ontology, prohibiting the equiprimordiality of ethics and ontology. Yet could they not be thought together? Levinas has asserted that the structure of existence does not provide the source of normativity. Is Being, however, really bare? Is Being—and by implication the nothing—really devoid of all ethical implications, or does the goodness of Being—or perhaps more precisely, the goodness of

188

the nothing—turn out to haunt Levinas in his ethics that is already haunted by Deep Kantianism? For Levinas prioritizes ethics over ontology in response to Heidegger. Would, then, this haunting by Being not be a haunting of fundamental ontology, a haunting by the shadow of Martin Heidegger? Elucidating this possibility of a double haunting by the shadows of both Kant and Heidegger is the task of the following chapter.

Chapter Five
Being and Two Variations of Nothingness: Levinas' Ontological Deep Kantianism

The previous chapter opened with Emmanuel Levinas' prioritization of ethics over ontology, of goodness over Being, which implies a certain notion of Being. If ethics is prior to and separate from ontology, then what is the notion of Being that Levinas opposes to the good? Certainly, as the result of his argument that ethics, not ontology, is first philosophy, his adoption of the Platonic good beyond being in *Totality and Infinity*, and the very title of *Otherwise than Being*, whatever notion of Being that he deploys in his philosophy appears to be barren of ethical implications, unable to operate as the source of normativity. The ethical relation is excluded from Being.[291] At first glance, Levinas appears determined to exclude Being from his ethics; Being is in his view inherently in opposition to the ethical. In his hostility to Being, Levinas seems to presuppose a Kantian conception of Being that would separate nature and freedom, the is from the ought. As Francois Raffoul observes, for Levinas, "ontology itself is evil."[292] This would seem to be vindicated by Levinas' statement that "being reveals itself as war," where the ontological is the incarnation of the violent destruction of the Other in the totality of the same.[293] Just as for Kant, nature can in no way provide the sources of normativity or freedom, for Levinas Being can never operate as the place for the ethical relation to the Other. Already, in the previous chapter, I have argued that affectivity for Levinas and Kant is divorced from the Good, while also lacking an ontologically indicative role. Levinas seems to offer among the most severe critiques of ontology in the history of philosophy, more so than even Kant, who at least articulates the *Critique of*

---

[291] Cf., *Totality and Infinity*, 102-103, 293.
[292] Raffoul 2010, 170.
[293] TI, 21.

Pure Reason in terms of providing the certain foundations for science and the cognition of phenomena, for in a sense at least the epistemology of a material if not metaphysical ontology. With regard to the ontological and the ethical, Levinas would seem to carry Deep Kantianism to its most radical conclusions, leaving him thoroughly in the shadow of Kant.

However, Levinas' ontology turns out to be more than a Kantian dismissal of the relevance of Being for the ethical. Raoul Moati in *Levinas and the Night of Being*, which is the sole significant work that engages Levinas' ontology as such, argues that we should "take the ontological project pursued by Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* seriously."[294] Moati suggests that *Totality and Infinity*, despite having been often misinterpreted as eradicating ontology, is a fundamentally ontological endeavor. At least at the time of the writing of the 1961 treatise, Levinas is not attempting to reject ontology as a whole, but rather "to liberate being from the totalization of fundamental ontology."[295] There is in *Totality and Infinity* an effort to redescribe ontology within an ethical framework, one that would allow ethics and ontology to exist within the same sphere. In Moati's words, "[f]rom the point of view of *Totality and Infinity*, ethics and ontology are not mutually exclusive There is very much a place within ontology for the revelation of the face—that is, for ethics—understood precisely as [the] *ultimate event of being*."[296] This ultimate event of Being consists in the nocturnal events of the "material conditions of dependence…of the sensible element" that allow for representation and conceptualization, that allow for the self to exist at all. [297]   Being for Levinas is in

---

[294] Moati 2017, xv.
[295] *Ibid*., xvi.
[296] *Ibid*., 12.
[297] *Ibid*., 50-51,

Moati's view comprised by the elemental *there is*, the condition for the possibility of representation that thus remains a darkness for cognition, which is unable to extend into the nocturnal depths of the elemental, nocturnal because the self encounters no-thing that can be grasped by theory, confronted by Being in general that remains a nothingness for the powers of comprehension of the self.

Moati is not the first to suggest this ontological character of Levinas' ethics; as early as 1993, Robert Manning in *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger* wrote that "Levinas's own philosophical project is, to some extent, an ontology; it involves a thinking of being."[298] Levinas himself supports the possibility of interpreting his work as inherently ontological on multiple occasions; in *Time and the Other*, he states that in its analysis of time as "the very relationship of the subject with the Other" it is not "anthropological but ontological."[299] In *Is it Righteous to Be?*, he speaks of "being-for-the-other" as "Ontological courtesy."[300] And in *Totality and Infinity* itself, he describes the encounter with the infinity of the Other as a "mode of being, the *infinition*, of infinity."[301] Levinas clearly makes reference to an ontological character of his thought that would perhaps recast his ethics as a new ontology that is attuned to the Other. Being as the totalization posited by the self, as the self's war against alterity, is not the final word of Being, which instead can be broken open and understood in terms of infinity as the porosity of Being to the Other. The Other in her alterity is always infinite as originating and extending beyond the same, refusing comprehension by infinitely exceeding the grasping reach of the self, she pulls me ever further into her depths that are

---

[298] Manning 1993, 90.
[299] *Time and the Other*, 39.
[300] *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 106.
[301] *Totality and Infinity*, 26.

of an origin that is wholly other to me. This infinite otherness contains within itself the possibility of thinking Being in terms of goodness, in terms of ethics, of Being as where the Other leaves her trace. Perhaps Being is itself the manifestation of the exteriority of the Other.

In what follows in this chapter, largely inspired by Moati's insights, I seek to investigate how Levinas' ethics is fundamentally ontological. However, unlike Moati who finds the night or nothingness of Being to consist in material elementality, I contend that the night of Being should be located in the abyssal, ungrounded character of the Other as destitute in *Totality and Infinity* and in the self as passivity in *Otherwise than Being*. That is, there are two modes of nothingness for Levinas in his philosophy, both of which in some way correspond to a respective mode of Being. The first mode of nothingness that Levinas explicitly develops is a positive no-thingness associated with the elemental depth of materiality, with the being of the *there is*. The no-thingness corresponds to the Being of the *there is*. The second mode of nothingness that remains unaddressed by Levinas is a negative, abyssal nothingness that shadows the self and the Other, that shadows the ethical relation itself, a nothingness that I will suggest Levinas resists insofar as this abyssal nothingness implies a intrinsic relation to the Being of Heideggerian fundamental ontology. This nothingness corresponds to or at the very least points to Being as the groundless ground that supports the self as Dasein, the nullity of Being, the lack of ground that the self must confront. By clarifying the notions of nothingness and also of Being for Levinas, I hope to show that he provides a clue for overcoming Deep Kantianism in the ontological character of his ethics. This ontological character consists in framing the ethical relation between self and Other in terms of

nothingness, that which is the condition for the possibility of openness to the Other at all. There is, I argue, implicit in Levinas a notion of nothingness that permeates the ethical relation between the self and Other, an abyssal nothingness that by constituting the ungrounded character of the self opens the self to the Other, and by constituting the ungrounded character of the Other mandates that the self respond to the sufferings and needs of the Other. Though Levinas does not himself employ the term nothingness with regard to the ethical relation, the phenomena of destitution and passivity that he describes seem to suggest what to me seems to best be called a nothingness. Thus, clarifying what Levinas means by nothingness when he does use the term is critical to the path of the argument that I am making, which requires that spend some time discussing the nothing as it appears in Levinas before proceeding to where I find the nothingness of Levinasian ethics.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss the positive no-thingness of the elemental *there is*, as is most fully developed in the early text *Existence and Existents* and continues from there into *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*. The second section of the chapter will focus on the abyssal nothingness of the Other in *Totality and Infinity*, while in the third and final part of the chapter I will elucidate the abyssal nothingness of the self in *Otherwise than Being*. This structure departs from the usual course of the argument that I have taken in the preceding chapters, where I began with the clue for overcoming Deep Kantianism and then turned to how this clue remains haunted by the shadow of Deep Kantianism. Here, since the clue for overcoming Deep Kantianism is only implicit rather than explicit in the work of Levinas, I will begin with Levinas' own understanding of the nothing and Being, which is how his ontology

remains within the shadow of Deep Kantianism, and then I will address how he provides

the scattered resources for an ontology that begins to overcome Deep Kantianism.

The No-thingness of the Elemental There Is

Separate from his concept of Being that is deployed in ontology to ensure the

totalization of the world into a system for the self that I discussed in the previous chapter,

Levinas develops a new notion of Being in general. This original conception of Being,

though present in *Totality and Infinity*, has its fullest expression in *Existence and*

Existents. Thus, I will diverge from the method of beginning my readings of Levinas

with *Totality and Infinity*, taking my point of departure from *Existence and Existents*, an

approach that is especially recommended since it will allow us to trace the path of how *il*

y a, the *there is*, retains a similar role for Levinas from *Existence and Existents* through

Totality and Infinity all the way to *Otherwise than Being*. *Existence and Existents* is

arguably the most explicitly ontological of Levinas' works.

The development of the *il y a* emerges directly as a response to Martin

Heidegger's fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* in *Existence and Existents*, where

Levinas provides his most thorough development of ontology that also perhaps clarifies

why for him the nothing and being are inextricably intertwined. Levinas begins his

analysis with the claim that the "dialectic of being and nothingness continues to dominate

Heideggerian ontology."[302] As found in Heidegger, Being and nothingness dominate on

another according to Levinas, standing as two equal partners. Levinas asks, "[a]re not

Being and nothingness, which, in Heidegger's philosophy, are equivalent or coordinated,

---

[302] *Existence and Existents*, 4.

not rather phases of a more general state of existence, which is nowise constituted by nothingness? We shall call it the fact that *there is*."[303] Being and nothingness in Heidegger do not according to Levinas arrive at the most primordial level of existence; they are actually derivative. They cover up the originary realm, rather than elucidating it. Before Being and the nothing, there simply is the *there is*.

As such, the notion of Being that Heidegger uses is according to Levinas fundamentally a concept of ontology that signifies the thematization done by the self in theoretical knowing. *Existence and Existents* states that "[a]nxiety, a comprehension of nothingness, is a comprehension of Being only inasmuch as Being itself is determined by nothingness."[304] In Heidegger, then, at least if we follow Levinas, Being is fundamentally conceptualized, the object of totalization and grasping, reduced to the order of the same. Levinas seeks a new account of Being, one that is not based in thematized knowing, but refers to the reality of the world as encountered by sensibility. As encountered through sensibility, Being would be freed from the distortions of grasping comprehension. For "the cycle by which being, refusing utter negation, returns always in the guise of a phantom, in the elusive form of…the *there is*."[305] Whenever one seeks to negate Being, to drive it into nothingness, it comes forth once again in the guise of nothingness.

Much in the style of Heidegger, for whom anxiety was the key to the nothing and thus also to being, Levinas also identifies certain felt experiences that indicate the *there is*, specifically those of "fatigue and indolence."[306] However, unlike Heidegger, these

---

[303] Ibid., 5.
[304] Ibid., 4.
[305] Sallis 1998, 152.
[306] EE, 11.

feelings belong to sensibility and lack an intentional structure. In fatigue, "[t]o be weary is to be weary of being….[T]he concrete plenitude of fatigue has this form. In the simplicity, unity, and obscurity of fatigue, it is like the lag of an existent that is tarrying behind its existing."[307] Indolence is characterized by "an impotent and joyless aversion to the burden of existence itself."[308] The common feature of these two experiences is the encounter with raw existence as such. No particular being or object is the intentional aim of fatigue and indolence, which are wrapped up in sensibility, shown in the previous chapter to exclude intentionality. Again departing from Heidegger's anxiety in which the nothing, a lack, is disclosed, the absence of beings or the so-called lack of fatigue and indolence is the absence found in plenitude as opposed to abyssal nothingness. The capacities of the mind to categorize and dominate reality disappear when the person finds herself before the sheer fullness of existence. Being is too much for her to bear; she finds herself at a loss, in danger of being overwhelmed by existence itself. It is not the nothing that threatens to submerge her, but the richness of the *there is* or Being.[309]

---

[307] *Ibid*., 24.

[308] *Ibid*., 17.

[309] Levinas certainly deserves credit for attempting to perform a phenomenological analysis of indolence and fatigue, which have generally gone unnoticed, both within and beyond the phenomenological tradition. Yet despite this attempt, I am reluctant to agree with his analysis, where he seems to me to misinterpret the experiential givens. For he characterizes the affections of indolence and fatigue as the result of the self being overwhelmed by the confrontation with the anonymity of Being in general that swallows up and burdens the self. The self is for Levinas indolent because it cannot make a choice, it is reluctant to do anything at all, and exhausted since it cannot go on, it cannot continue to bear the weight of Being. In both of these cases the self is suffocated by Being that demands that the self persevere, even though the self never asked to continue or undergo the demands of existing. However, this articulation of indolence and fatigue blames Being for oppressing the self that finds itself trapped within Being. A deeper phenomenological analysis would reveal that the problem here is not Being, but the self; if there were a self that had infinite strength or more significantly existence, that had total mastery over itself, then this self would never feel exhaustion or indolence. For such a transparent and mighty self would never feel as if could not act or continue on, as it would be able to meet all exigencies with whatever power was required, never exhausting itself or falling short. Having no limits, this self would always be able to continue in its existence and not be overwhelmed in indolence and fatigue. Indolence and fatigue, I argue, reveal themselves in the experience of an "I cannot choose, I am unable to choose, I want to choose but cannot bring myself to choose" in the former, and in an "I cannot go on, I cannot continue, I cannot go through any more of this, I do not have the energy" in the latter. That is, the problem or difficulty of indolence and

Levinas describes the *il y a* as follows: "imagine all beings, things and persons, reverting to nothingness. One cannot put this return to nothingness outside of all events. But what of this nothingness itself? Something would happen, if only night and the silence of nothingness."[310] The *il y a* is not a nihilating nothingness, it is not a total lack or absence, an abyss that signifies ground without ground. There is no reference to ground in the *il y a*. The nihility of the *there is* is not the nihility that belongs to Heideggerian nothingness or abyss. Rather, the nihility of the *there is* functions as the negation of particular, determinate things. The individual thing disappears in the *il y a*. All things, all trees, rocks, stars, and pens, and all persons as well, become nothing in the *il y a*. Therefore, the nothingness of the *il y a* is best understood as no-thingness instead of nothingness, being the lack of determinate and singular things, which does not imply the abyssal character associated with nothingness. In this lack of determinate things, there still remains something positive. No-thingness suggests a presence in the absence of things, the sheer presence of presence itself, prior to being limited down to determinate beings.

Such sheer presence is typified by Levinas as night and silence, which are not themselves, properly speaking, nothing, but no-thing. In the darkness and silence of the night, no thing becomes manifest, yet there is still night. In indolence, no action appears as a real possibility, but one still is in the feeling of indolence. In fatigue, a person is

---

fatigue is with the self that as not self-sufficient, as originarily a nothingness, lacks the requisite existential motivation or capacity within itself to choose or continue to act. The nothingness of the self prevents it from responding to the demands of Being; precisely in not being able to go on, in not being able to bring myself to act, with the emphasis on the not, am I exhausted and indolent. My nothingness, insufficiency, and weakness is what allows me to feel indolent and fatigued. Because I am lacking, because I do not exist by myself, am I not able to go on or choose. The weight of Being is too much for me to bear, which results from my lack and not the vastness of Being.

[310] *Ibid*., 51-52.

exhausted though not by something determinate but feels herself simply exhausted by the burden of being subject to Being, so that all is equally tiring. In this darkness of Being, no thing appears. That is, there is an absence of things but still a real presence that becomes a burden, in that one simply continues to exist, yet this existence is nothing definite. There are no tasks to take up, no things to be manipulated, no tools to be used. The person is in the night of Being, a darkness that as existing is not nothing but no-thing.

This night is an "impersonal, anonymous, yet inextinguishable 'consummation' of being, which murmurs in the depths of nothingness itself [that] we shall designate by the term *there is*. The *there is*, inasmuch as it resists a personal form, is 'being in general.'"[311] This use of the term nothingness is one of the few appearances of the word that describes something in the world of experience rather than only showing up in the context of the pair of Being and nothingness. As the passage makes evident, Levinas identifies nothingness, as no-thingness, with Being. Levinas maintains that we "could say that the night is the very experience of the *there is*, if the term experience were not inapplicable to a situation which involves the total exclusion of light."[312] As these statements indicate, Levinas' understanding of the nothing is positive, where the nothing is in actuality Being itself, prior to all determinate things or existents. Nothing or more precisely no-thingness is positive, designating a plenum, an upwelling of overwhelming fullness, rather than Heideggerian Being that always recedes into the abyss. As a plenum, the no-thingness of the *there is* is thus not ground. When things vanish, what appears is not an abyss but an overwhelming plenitude of the fullness of being itself,

---

[311] *Ibid.*, 52.
[312] *Ibid.*

manifest as no-thing. But this is not really a manifestation; the night precisely is the lack of manifestation. No thing becomes manifest in being in general, since being itself is a darkness. Humans experience and know in the light, in the realm of determinate things, yet when Being itself is supposedly encountered, what is encountered is the lack of encounter. Being "is immediately there."[313] As there, the "*[t]here is* is an impersonal form, like in *it rains*, or *it is warm*. Its anonymity is essential. The mind does not find itself faced with an apprehended exterior. The exterior – if one insists on this term – remains uncorrelated with an interior. It is no longer given."[314] The *il y a* precedes all distinctions of interiority and exteriority, not even having a surface that can be determined and so appear. Thus, it breaks with intentionality and is not given to experience. It exceeds the grasp of phenomenology, which is always concerned with phenomena, determinate things that appear. No thing is grasped in the *there is*. For Levinas to say that it is anonymous, that this anonymity is central to the *there is*, reinforces the absolute impossibility of naming, of predication, of determination of the *il y a*. It is "the sheer fact of being in which one participates," which "[d]arkness fills it like a content; it is full, but full of the nothingness of everything."[315] This interpretation of the nothing is precisely why, 27 years later in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas will state that nothingness is filled up by essence, by being. For in his account nothingness is the lack of things, which is to say, the presence of Being itself. When nothingness appears n Levinas' work, it refers to the night of Being, the richness of material depth. In the words of Drew Dalton, "[t]he excess of the *il y a* inheres in that it refers to an appearance of

---

[313] *Ibid.*
[314] *Ibid.*, 53.
[315] *Ibid.*

Being so complete that it consumes and obliterates any singularity—it exceeds and goes beyond the limits which allow individual beings to emerge."[316] The no-thing is the realm of being. When entities vanish, what remains is being itself. The absence of entities leaves being in general that in its fullness is simply felt in sensibility as *there* in the manner of a stifling no-thingness that eludes comprehension.

Levinas associates the *il y a*, as the vanishing of things, with "the absence of the world, the elemental."[317] This elemental is material; "[t]he discovery of the materiality of being is not a discovery of a new quality, but of its formless proliferation. Behind the luminosity of forms, by which beings already relate to our 'inside,' matter is the very fact of the *there is*…"[318] The elemental is the absence of world in that it excludes all instruments, things, and theories that are created by the self. The element is not the Heideggerian world of tools and tasks, but something prior to and underlying the totality of references. This turn to materiality is hardly a return to a pre-Kantian concept of matter as substance in the debates between realism and idealism. Levinas writes, "[h]ere is a notion of materiality which no longer has anything in common with matter as opposed to thought and mind, which fed classical materialism."[319] This is hardly matter as substance, as self-subsistent independent reality that exists in and through itself. It is not matter following mechanistic laws or matter as an extended thing, as in Descartes, or even as the unformed prime matter of Aristotle; all of these concepts of matter already make matter into an object, a thing, that is an intentional correlate of consciousness. Instead, the *there is*, as materiality, refers to a materiality deeper than that of things.

---

[316] Dalton 2009, 109.
[317] *Ibid.*, 44.
[318] *Ibid.*, 51.
[319] *Ibid.*

When things and objects disappear, the being that remains is materiality. This is not a being, but Being in general. Such materiality is the elemental. The elemental indicates the density of Being itself, the indeterminate richness of sheer matter. Out of this matter, all determinate things emerge through the theoretical grasping of consciousness. Plants, animals, and jewels all arise from the elemental when it comes into contact with the self.[320]

The elemental character of the *il y a* is developed further in *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas provides instances of what comprises the elemental. In the elemental, "the side it presents to us does not determine an object, remains entirely anonymous. It is wind, earth, sea, sky, air."[321] Just as in *Existence and Existents*, the elemental is anonymous, and so prior to named, determinate things. The examples that Levinas mentions, such as earth and sky, provide experiences—or perhaps non-experiences—in which the elemental wells up. In earth and sky, a person properly speaking encounters no thing. There is nothing determinate, but rather the sheer presence of elementality out of which all things emerge, and without which they would not exist. The elemental is the material condition for the possibility of things, the fullness of existence out of which an entity comes into its own particularity.

In their fullness, the "sky, the earth, the sea, the wind—suffice for themselves."[322] The elemental is without ground. It simply is, independent of anything else, but supports everything else as the space in which the conscious self might demarcate things. The

---

[320] This coming into contact with the self is crucial for determinate things to exist; what Levinas seems to be saying is that the self is able to limit-down or represent for itself aspects of the elemental that are then by the power of theory separated from the elemental. This remains, however, beyond the scope of this study.
[321] *Totality and Infinity*, 132.
[322] *Ibid*.

elemental supports things, but does not ground them. Levinas writes that all "possession is situated within the non-possessable which envelops or contains without being able to be contained or enveloped."[323] What is emerges from the elemental but whereas these things are contained in it, they do not exhaust the elemental. No limit is found in the elemental, the depth of which prolongs until "it is lost in the earth and in the heavens."[324] The elemental is the stifling depth of matter that precedes and functions as the source for things to be in-formed by the thinking self. They exist from the element.

With respect to both Being and the nothing in Levinas, the literature has focused on this notion of the *il y a* as the elemental, in particular in *Totality and Infinity*. The consensus is that the nothing for Levinas is the positivity of Being found in the *there is*. John Sallis writes that "[t]he there is can be called a nocturnal space, a space filled with darkness, a space full of the nothingness of everything."[325] The *il y a* refers to "nature and even to elemental nature."[326] Recently, Raoul Moati has stated that the enjoyment of the elemental "reveals the irreducible depth of the sensible inscription of the self within the world."[327] The person only emerges out the elemental as the result of her embodiment. This elemental world is "first and foremost the 'milieu' that 'bathes' the sensible ego."[328] The basis for all things and persons is to be found in the elemental. This elemental is a nocturnal event, which still remains within the sphere of ontology and being.[329] The nothingness suggested by the nocturnal is the no-thingness of the sensible encounter with the elemental, of what precedes and allows for intentional consciousness.

---

[323] *Ibid.*, 131.
[324] *Ibid.*
[325] Sallis 1998, 155.
[326] *Ibid.* Cf. Sallis 2018, "Alterity and the Elemental," in *Elemental Discourses*.
[327] Moati 2017, 63.
[328] *Ibid.*, 64.
[329] *Ibid.*, 65.

Thus, it is a positive nothing, or being. Even in its beginnings, the field of Levinas studies has generally held that Levinas' nothing is the *there is*. In 1976, Philip Lawton wrote that "the there is [is] the primordial milieu in which (one) bathes…prior to the relation between Being and a being, because there is not yet any being recognizable or identifiable in its *particularité d'étant*, its unicity and specificity."[330] Levinas is understood to interpret the duality of nothingness and being as emerging from a prior positive no-thingness, the Being in general, of the *there is*. There seems to not be an abyssal nothing in Levinas, who would appear to have escaped the long arm of Heideggerian ontology.

In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas continues to emphasize the priority of the *there is* over any Heideggerian Being that for Levinas is the duality of Being and nothingness. He states, "the negativity which attempts to repel being is immediately submerged by being. The void that hollows out is immediately filled with the mute and anonymous rustling of the *there is*."[331] Any attempt at negation will only succeed in the negation of things, leading to the no-thing but not to abyssal nihility. Rather, what remains is the *there is*, Being in general, prior to all negation and affirmation. As prior, it defies negation, meaning that only determinate beings disappear by the act of negation. Here in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas retains his conception of the *there is* that originates in *Existence and Existents* and also is present in *Totality and Infinity*. At the core of his ontology, consistent throughout all three texts, there is an elemental Being in general that precedes all things and is that from which things proceed. This elemental *il y a* is a night, in which no-thing appears. All that appears is the sheer fullness of existence that by

---

[330] Lawton 1976, 73.
[331] *Otherwise than Being*, 3.

overwhelming consciousness fails itself to appear. This fullness is nothing for Levinas, nothing as no-thing. The no-thing remains well within the sphere of Being, and is in fact precisely where Being or existence itself resides. Being for Levinas, when understood correctly not as thematization by consciousness refers to the elemental there is, the material depth of reality. This Being is not the Being introduced by the self as the instrument of thematization, but is the Being in general that the self is always already immersed in. This is a positive nothing, hardly the nihility, the abyss and lack of ground found in Heidegger.

Levinas is careful to distinguish his nothingness from that of Heidegger, stating "[t]he pure nothingness revealed by anxiety in Heidegger's analysis does not constitute the *there is*" and "[w]e are opposing, then, the horror of the night…to Heideggerian anxiety, the fear of being to the fear of nothingness."[332] Anxiety reveals the nothing as the abyssal lack of ground or self-sufficiency, and not merely the absence of things. This is not, of course, negativity in its logical sense, but ontological, as the nothingness that in its nihility constitutes as the groundless ground. Contrary to this dread for the nothing itself, Levinas interprets the *there is* as a fear of Being itself, a fear of no-thingness in which one is swallowed up by the plenitude of Being.[333] The no-thing is positive, the presence of sheer presence, an absence of things in exchange for the presence of existence itself that excludes the abyss. This difference of nothingnesses in Levinas and Heidegger would suggest also a difference in their respective understandings of Being, a

---

[332] EE, 57, 58.

[333] At this point, one might also wonder about Heidegger's *es gibt*; however, since Levinas' primary engagement with Heidegger is the early Heidegger that Levinas encountered by attending several of Heidegger's lecture courses during the 1920s, Levinas' interpretation of Being with respect to Heidegger engages primarily with the *Sein* of *Being and Time*. Consequently, the *es gibt* is beyond the scope of this study.

difference to which Levinas is attuned, as evidenced when in *Existence and Existents* he writes that "Being and nothingness, which, in Heidegger's philosophy, are equivalent or coordinated…phases of a more general state of existence, which is nowise constituted by nothingness….We shall call it the fact that *there is*."[334] For Levinas, the Heideggerian pair of Being and nothingness is a derivative phenomenon that only occurs within the domain of theory, the domain of comprehending intentional consciousness that demarcates and conceptualizes. Being and nothingness are discursive, emerging from a prior non-intentional encounter with what Levinas identifies as a more general state of existence. This more general state is the elemental *there is*, which is the encounter in sensibility with what precedes and allows for all discursivity in the first place. This Being as the *there is* is what Levinas seeks to set forth in his ontological investigations, where he claims to have found Being in its most originary character.

By clearly separating what he means by Being from what he takes Heidegger to mean by Being and nothingness, Levinas has provided a point of departure for us to better understand his ontology. On one side, there is for Levinas a concept as such of Being, which takes various forms through the history of human thinking, including in the Heideggerian duality of Being and nothingness. This discursive concept of Being is that version of Being that Levinas characterizes as war famously in *Totality and Infinity* and later in *Otherwise than Being*, an view of Being that I discussed in the previous chapter; the emphasis here is on the phrase *discursive concept*. The theoretical comprehension of the human mind has deployed, to ensure its totalization of things and others into the sameness of the self, a concept of Being that it has invented. This concept of Being is the

---

[334] EE, 5.

206

third term that says this *is* that, bringing all into the intentional, representing grasp of the self that assimilates, or at least seeks to assimilate, alterity into the same.

Distinct from and prior to this *concept* of Being, is non-discursive Being in general, the *there is*. In its originary meaning, the term Being for Levinas refers to the elemental depth of the *there is*. This Being in general, however, is not a concept, which is a crucial distinction for Levinas. For the *there is*, rather than having been posited by the self, is encountered by the self in sensibility, in the corporeal contact with the world. As that in which the self bathes, the *there is* stands as the elemental. Levinas wishes to push ontology further, beyond the sphere of grasping reason and concepts such as totalizing and Heideggerian Being. There is for Levinas, as Moati has suggested, an underside of Being that precedes any conception of Being, what Levinas calls the sensible night of Being that is constituted by the elemental *there is*. The sensible, pre-intentional encounter with Being in general is a nocturnal event of Being that supports and allows for any subsequent concept of Being that relies on representation. Before the mind can comprehend, it must be situated in a body and affective corporeality that is sustained by the enjoyment of the elemental *there is*. There are thus two ways of Being for Levinas of different standing. The first is intentional, discursive Being, what I will call totalized Being, and the second is non-intentional, sensible Being, what I will call elemental Being. To totalized Being for Levinas corresponds nothingness, the Heideggerian groundless ground that remains within Being as its negation, and to elemental Being corresponds no-thingness, the night of the vanishing of determinate things.

What is most relevant here for the purposes of this study insofar as it is focused on the possibility of overcoming Deep Kantianism is that for Levinas, neither totalized Being nor elemental Being are ethical phenomena. In the previous chapter, I have already illustrated how for Levinas totalized Being is not only unable to provide the source of normativity, but moreover is actively opposed to the ethical. Totalized Being is the means by which the self wages war on the Other, striving to violently assimilate her into itself. Insofar as the ethical is opposed to this totalized Being of the ontological, Levinas follows Kant by assuming that the ontological and the ethical, nature and freedom, Being and goodness, are separated by a great gulf that cannot be crossed. Insofar as Being is deployed by and for the self, it is the realm of egoism, of what Kant would call changing nature, that can never provide the foundations for ethics.

Similarly, the elemental Being that I have described in this chapter also lacks ethical significance for Levinas. The good as found in the Other is in no way grounded in or even implied by elemental Being The anonymity of the elemental, its sensible depth, does not constitute some other variety of alterity for Levinas. The *there is* says nothing about how the self is to live its life with regard to its responsibility for the Other. If anything, the sensations of fatigue and indolence in which one feels oneself oppressed by the *there is* in its Being will trap the self in its own solipsism, focused only on how it must suffer the burden of Being without end, unable to escape the pain of existing. The Other, as the Other person, is wholly separate from the elemental. Though Levinas seems to be correct that the elemental depth of the *there is* would be unable to inform the ethical relation, that both totalized Being and elemental Being fail to provide any insights regarding ethics is enough to show that Levinas remains haunted by Deep Kantianism,

since whatever sense of Being that Levinas employs simply includes no connection to the good. The good and Being remain opposed for Levinas, just as they were for Kant. Levinas has continued the Kantian and ultimately Humean prejudice of a poor, thin meaning of Being that does not refer to the ethical. Being for Levinas, following Kant, is barren of the good, entirely empty of ethical significance that might provide a source of normativity, while the good is not grounded in the jointures and contents of daily existence. The good becomes strangely abstract.[335] Being and the good remain opposed.

However, this is precisely the point at which, despite Levinas' best efforts, one should ask if there is not in fact an opening in his philosophy for a Heideggerian abyssal nothingness. Levinas' study in *Existence and Existents* does not seek to refute the possibility of abyssal nothingness, but instead seeks to work out a positive nihility. Even granting the veracity of Levinas' claims, given that he articulates a positive nothingness that differs from the nothing in Heidegger leaves wholly untouched Heidegger's analysis of the nothing in *Being and Time*. If there is another, albeit only implicit notion of the nothing in Levinas, one that might permeate the ethical relation itself, then this notion of the nothing would point toward a richer meaning of Being that is intrinsically joined with the good. Through the nothingness of self and Other, Being and the good might once again be thought together. This will, I suggest, constitute Levinas' second clue for

---

[335] This is perhaps slightly unusual, given that Levinas has articulated his ethics in terms of the unique Other person in her alterity; would this not be a reference to concrete existence? However, Levinas refuses to describe the ethical relation in terms of existence, and as we have seen goes so far as to oppose ontology and ethics. Though the Other might be the focus and center of existence, Levinas does not explore this possibility of thinking Being itself as alterity, as the Other, where Being would be constituted in some way by alterity, so that while the ethical relation would still in a way be the first relation, it would no longer be in opposition to the ontological. Ontology would be in terms of the ethical, but, since the Other constitutes me and I thus exist or have Being by the Other, then as such Being would be equiprimordial with the Other. Ethics and ontology would be equiprimordial. Whether this is a real possibility will return in the final chapter of this study.

overcoming Deep Kantianism. To this task of elucidating where in Levinas' philosophy this clue of the abyssal nothing of Heidegger and its relation to the good emerges I will now turn.

The Abyssal Nothingness of the Other

As is well-known, Levinas uses the language of infinity to describe the Other in *Totality and Infinity*. Yet, in contrast, he also frequently characterizes the Other as poor, destitute, vulnerable, and naked. Even in the first half of the work when he is discussing the atheist separation of the egoist enjoyment of the self, he remarks that "[t]he face has turned to me—and this is its very nudity."[336] The originary face-to-face encounter with the Other is from the beginning a nudity of the Other. The Other is exposed before me. In a certain sense, this means that the Other has appeared, bare of any covering. She is present to me in the encounter with her face; she comes before me as an alterity that refuses any conceptual or thematic covering that I might attempt to impose upon her. However, Levinas is attempting here to work out something even more significant in his claim of the Other's innate nudity. He observes, "[t]he nakedness of the face is destituteness. To recognize the Other is to recognize a hunger."[337] Clearly, Levinas is speaking of more than exposure in the sense of being encountered. Rather, nudity itself refers to the lack, the destituteness, present in the Other. To be nude, besides the literal connotations of not having clothing and so being exposed to the environment so that one dies or is at least harmed, is to not have what is necessary to live. The nude Other is a being who is bare, who lacks. This bareness or lack is destitution, poverty, vulnerability.

---

[336] TI, 75.
[337] *Ibid.*

The Other has nothing with which she can protect herself or take care of any of her needs, including the basic needs of hunger and protection from the environment. She is hungry, she is cold, she is needy. The fundamental things that she requires to live, to satisfy her needs, are not available to her. To be hungry indicates that a person always needs what is not her own, and cannot satisfy such need. She is not sufficient unto herself, finding herself thrown back into her hunger. Unlike the sated and separated atheist ego for Levinas, the Other is empty. The happy self of *Totality and Infinity* creates a sharp contrast with the impoverished, miserable Other to whom it is juxtaposed. Even early in the work, when the Other is not the focus, the Other begins to be spoken of in terms of poverty and vulnerability.

Once Levinas turns to the face-to-face relation explicitly, the destitution of the Other is developed in even more detail. In the encounter with the face, the nudity, "destitution and hunger" appears.[338] Levinas states, "[t]he being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity— its hunger—without my being able to be deaf to that appeal."[339] Once again, Levinas is focusing on the inherent destitution of the Other. This destitution for him is central to the ethical relation and the obligation that it imposes upon the self. The Other appeals to me in the face-to-face relation through hunger, through her demanding that I respond. In my existence itself, I am summoned to her aid. I can only help a being who is hungry. The self encounters the Other in her vulnerability and poverty, the lack intrinsic to the Other. By the recognition of such lack, the self finds itself responsible for the Other since it alone is the being who can aid the Other in her lack. By encountering an absence in the

---

[338] *Ibid.*, 200.
[339] *Ibid.*

Other, the self is called to respond to the Other. If the Other did not lack, I could never be responsible for her. There is nothing that I could do for her in her self-sufficiency.

The destitute Other is characterized by Levinas as "the stranger, the widow, and the orphan."[340] These examples are not merely accidental sedimentations of Levinas' Jewish background. Instead, they show forth the nothingness of the Other. For "[t]he face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger."[341] The stranger, the one exiled and shunned by all, having been left to himself to die; the widow has lost her dearest, and now must go on alone, unsupported by the one who lived for her; and the orphan is abandoned after the death of her parents, with no one to care for her, are all powerful testimonies to the nothingness and weakness of the others around the self. These examples show the Other when she is isolated from other Others, when she is alone and thus there are no resources available to her. That is, besides her need for the Other not being met, her own bodily needs such as shelter and food are left unsatisfied as well. She is completely destitute, devoid of all sustenance that might assist her. She is entirely vulnerable in her inability to support herself. The language of widow, orphan, and stranger that Levinas employs should not be taken in an exclusionary sense; for what these images convey is the lack, the destitution, the hunger, of every Other who I encounter. All others are at their core vulnerable, weak beings who summon me to their assistance. The poverty of every Other is indicated by the orphan and the stranger. The Other is not self-sufficient, meaning that she is not her own ground. She does not have what is necessary to live, or even to continue existing. Levinas supports this in a passage from *Is it Righteous to Be?*, "[t]he other concerns me in all his material

---

[340] *Ibid.*, 215. Cf. *ibid.*, 251.
[341] *Ibid.*, 213.

misery. It is a matter, eventually, of nourishing him, of clothing him."[342] I must support

the Other in her concrete material needs, showing that for Levinas, even in her infinity,

the Other still contains a lack, a need for my support, or, as I would identify it, a

nothingness. All of the manifold and constant requirements of the Other for her to

remain in existence confront me, demand that I respond and care for these needs. The

Other lacks in particular the material and in general the ontological necessities for her

existence. This hardly means that I can approach the Other as her hero or savior,

however, when I am always already late, since she was hungry, cold, and destitute before

I met her. The instant that I have encountered the particular Other, I have already failed

to give adequate attention to her needs. In her needs, in her nothingness, she requires me

to respond. Because she does not exist in herself as her own ground, because she is

herself always outside of herself in searching for what might sustain her, I am responsible

for supporting her in her existence.

This not having, however, is more than simply a lack of possession; to not have

what is necessary to be, indicates a lack in one's being itself, a not. This not, as the

origin of need for what satisfies the not, for what allows one to be, is non-being,

nothingness. The Other does not have her own ground. There is nihility at the core of

the Other, as this nihility is precisely what makes the Other hunger and need. The

destitution and hunger of the Other is the nothingness of the Other. Levinas' terms of

destitution, poverty, and hunger refer ultimately to the nothingness of the Other.

Fundamentally, the phenomenology of the encounter with the Other reveals the

nothingness and not only the infinity of the Other. The Other exists as emerging out of

---

[342] *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 52.

her nihility. She is destitute and poor because she is nothing in herself, nothing without sustenance and the other Other. If one does not possess what one needs to exist, then she does not have even her own Being. Her Being comes from elsewhere than herself.

Levinas confirms even more the nothingness of the Other when in *Totality and Infinity* he states that "[d]eath…is present only in the Other, and only in him does it summon me urgently to my final essence, to my responsibility."[343] The Other is a being who is going to die. As a mortal being, the Other calls me to responsibility. Precisely because in her being-toward-death does the Other allow for the ethical relation to occur at all. That the Other must face her death, demands that I aid her in her being-toward-death. This "being affected by the death of the other is the remarkable and essential event of my psychism as human psychism."[344] Further, in the 1982 interview "The Philosopher and Death," Levinas expands on the significance of the mortality of the Other when he states that "the human consists precisely in opening itself to the death of the other, in being preoccupied with his death" and "one must return to the relation with the face as the mortality of the neighbor and the impossibility of leaving him to his solitude."[345] To be a self, to be a human person, means to be oriented toward the death of the Other. Against Heidegger, who prioritizes the self's own death, Levinas seeks to establish the primacy of the death of the Other. In caring for the Other in her mortality itself, I become myself and become human. To encounter an Other means to encounter her in the fact that she is going to die, which requires that I respond to her coming death by ensuring that she does not die alone, that I be there for her at the moment of her death. Not only I am required

---

[343] TI, 179.
[344] *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 53.
[345] "The Philosopher and Death, '124, 127, in *Is it Righteous to Be?*

to direct myself to caring for her in the hour of her death, but since she herself is a mortal being, then I must in my responsibility do all that I can to prevent her death, to prevent her annihilation.

The mortality of the Other indicates the nothingness of the Other. Though Levinas does not introduce the term nothingness in his discussions of the death of the Other, that she is going to die indicates, more than anything else, that she is not self-sufficient, that she is not her own ground. Death means that the Other cannot support herself or ensure that she can by herself and her own power remain as herself. For, were she self-sufficient, she would never die, having all that she needs to remain herself for all eternity. Her death shows that she is fundamentally lacking, that she is constituted by a nothingness at her core. The Other exists precisely insofar as she is moving toward her death, in that her whole life is under the shadow of death, where all she does is seek to prolong her life in the avoidance of death. The nothingness revealed in death constitutes the Other as herself, who in her mortality summons me to my responsibility to aid her, to help her do as much as possible to overcome her native nothingness, so that she does not become swallowed up by the abyss. Given that Levinas places great weight on the mortality of the Other at a phenomenological level, the nothingness of death must be taken into consideration alongside the infinity of the Other. Only a mortal being and a being who cares for the mortality of the Other can be ethical beings, indicating that ethical responsibility assumes the death of the Other. But the death of the Other is the fundamental indication of the nothingness of the Other who in her groundlessness and insufficiency approaches me.

This nothingness, unlike the positive no-thing of the *il y a*, is abyssal. It is an absence encountered in the lived experience of the Other person. When she is encountered, nothingness itself comes to the fore. The subject does not encounter only the infinite when it encounters the nothingness of the Other, but instead encounters emptiness and abyss. A lack of being as such constitutes the Other. I encounter a being who is always already in danger of becoming nothing, which reveals that she is nothing in herself. Her existence is wholly derivative, meaning that she is radically ungrounded, confirmed especially by her mortality. Her separation from ground is her nihility, so that she herself is the nothing. The phenomenological evidence for this argument is given through the constant need of the Other for what is not the Other. The Other needs food, shelter, drink, clothing, friendship, and love to exist at all. Without these, the Other falls into the nothing. Levinas' recognition of hunger and destitution is a recognition of surface phenomena that reveal the further ontological situation of the nothingness of the Other that comes most radically to the fore in the death of the Other. At every moment, the Other exists precisely through being outside of herself, exteriorized from her own native nihility. Thus, the Other is constituted at her core by the nothing. This nothingness can only be escaped by the movement outside of herself, which is characterized by need and desire. The self that finds itself before the Other is therefore required to live for her on the basis of her needing the self. In the ethical relation, the self encounters a being who needs the self, who needs what the self alone can give. The Other calls upon the self to aid her in overcoming her nothingness so that she might find ground. The nothingness that I see in the Other calls me to care for her, to love her, to serve her, so that she might live. Only a being who is needy to the point of absolute

brokenness as found in the nothing can impose upon me the ethical relation. A being who needed nothing at all, who appeared to me as wholly self-sufficient and autonomous in itself, would not require any action or response on my part, for there is nothing that I could do for such a being, who needs, desires, and wants nothing that it does not already have. There can be no ethics with a self-sufficient and closed being.

But this argument that there is a nothing in Levinas' Other seems initially to conflict with Levinas' insistence on the infinity of the Other. For he states that "if experience precisely means a relation with the absolutely other, that is, with what always overflows thought, the relation with infinity accomplishes experience in the fullest sense of the word."[346] But the "absolutely other is the Other."[347] Therefore, the absolutely Other is the infinite. This infinity consists in being absolutely other; as Other, the Other can never be reduced to the finite powers of comprehension that belong to the subject. The Other is an infinity, a fullness, a height and transcendence that towers over me, pulling me outside of myself in her very infinity. Levinas appears to grant priority to the Other in her infinity, not her nothingness; how, then, can these be reconciled? Is to say that the Other is both infinite and nothing not a contradiction?

This question, however, misunderstands the terms of nothingness and infinity deployed here. For the abyssal nothingness of the Other that I have drawn out from *Totality and Infinity* is not logical negation, not abstract emptiness devoid of any sort of concrete content or meaning. Nothingness is not the absence of signification. This abyssal nothingness refers to the concrete experience of the Other as not being self-sufficient, as not existing out of her own ground, of not possessing her own existence or

---

[346] *Ibid.*, 25.
[347] *Ibid.*, 39.

being able to keep herself in existence. This is a positive, rich, abyssal nothingness, a nothingness that constitutes. The Other *is* in her nothingness, she exists in the nothing that she is. This nothingness is as concrete as the rumbling of her stomach, her broken heart, her lonely, forsaken countenance, and her anxiety toward her death. These are hardly logical negations, but they are a nothing, a lack that makes her the being who she is. Of great significance here is that infinity does not for Levinas indicate that the Other is somehow her own source; infinity means that the Other is of an origin and constitution that is entirely other than my own, that I am in no way her foundation, so that she remains always infinitely beyond my powers. She is infinite in that she always eludes my powers and opens me to my infinite responsibility for her that I can never discharge. This infinite responsibility comes upon me in the destitute nothingness that confronts me when I encounter the Other; I must respond to her needs and lacks by satisfying these through offering up myself. Since the Other is nothingness, I am infinitely responsible for her needs that never end, for her needs that belong to her in her alterity and nothingness. Consequently, the infinity and nothingness of the Other are not only not in mutual opposition, but together constitute the Other. The Other is the midpoint between infinity and nothing, between alterity and abyss; were I to encounter her as anything less, I would not experience infinite responsibility. The ethical relation requires an Other who is both nothingness and the infinite.

The Abyssal Nothingness of the Self

There is, I argue, a nothingness that does not only permeate the Other, but also the self in Levinas' ethics. This is found, not in *Totality and Infinity*, but in *Otherwise than*

Being. The Other and the self, both the 1961 and 1974 works, respectively, remain shot through with the nothing, and so are still under the shadow of fundamental ontology. As under the shadow of ontology, the ethical relation would thus begin to perhaps unite the good and Being, or at least the good and the nothing. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas begins his analysis of the insufficiency of the self when he writes that the "breakup of identity, this changing of being into signification, that is, into substitution, is the subject's subjectivity, or its subjection to everything, its susceptibility, its vulnerability, that is, its sensibility."[348] Levinas is here rethinking the notion of subjectivity and also its relation to personal identity. For historically, subjectivity, such as in Kant, has been associated with the primacy of the subject and its conditions for the possibility of experience, or even in Aristotle, the subject is that in which predicates inhere. Though the notion of subject later became more personalized by Kant, at its core subjectivity has been interpreted by philosophy as indicative of something that is self-sufficient, that in which other things, predicates, attributes, knowledge, psychic states, *exist as such*, but itself exists in nothing else. Subjectivity as substance, as standing in itself, is the historical definition of the subject that as personalized retains this characteristic of standing in itself, that in which representations, cognition, and inclinations inhere. That is, subjectivity has been interpreted in terms of power and strength, the self's claim to exist in and by itself. It claims that it does not require anything else besides itself to have Being.

Yet Levinas precisely seeks to challenge this substantial subject, to think *subject* closer to the Latin roots of the word, as sub-ject, *sub-jacere*, to be thrown under. The

---

[348] OtB, 14. We will need to return later to this reference to sensibility and how it is the locus of subjectivity.

subject, or really sub-ject for Levinas is what is thrown under, what must undergo and suffer. This is a reversal of the notion of subject that no longer refers to the primacy of the self but to the weakness of the self. The sub-ject becomes the being who does not stand in herself, who must as not self-sufficient therefore suffer what she does not want to suffer, since to resist is simply not in her power. The sub-ject is thus vulnerable and susceptible, forced to live and experience what she never had any say in whether she lived or experienced. This also constitutes a breakup of identity, which so often was associated with the substantial dimension of the subject, that exists in itself precisely as self-standing, as an identity without difference. However, Levinas observes that the identity of the sub-ject is ruptured when the self is understood as vulnerable. The self, as not first being active but passive in vulnerability, does not simply contain its identity in itself. Its identity comes from its weakness, its suffering and passivity.

The breakup of identity occurs in the "[s]ubjectivity, locus and null-site of this breakup, [that] comes to pass as a passivity more passive than all passivity."[349] To be thrown-under fundamentally means to be passive rather than active, but in a passivity that is not simply in mutual and equal opposition to activity. The passivity to which Levinas refers is not contained within a duality of activity and passivity, where both are merely different sides of the same binary, in a relation that as lacking any definite priority or order allows the one to become dominant, and then the other. Passivity for Levinas cannot be overcome or met by activity, or characterized by any passivity that would simply be the mere opposite of activity. Rather, passivity is not any determinate passion, feeling, or situation that befalls the self or something that is waiting to be moved to act, to

---

[349] *Ibid*.

be actualized, but is rather the constitution of sub-jectivity itself that as such would be the condition for the possibility of activity, or even the later binary of activity and passivity. To be sub-ject, to be thrown under, is the event of passivity itself, in which the self exists in receiving itself, in finding itself existing not from itself but from a source that is not its own. The self is subjected to both itself and external circumstances, having never volunteered to be itself or to experience the events of life. To exist as the self is to exist as passive, as openness in passivity.

In other words, passivity does not refer to the status of being inert; Levinas argues that "[t]he self as a creature is conceived in a passivity more passive still than the passivity of matter, that is, prior to the virtual coinciding of a term with itself. The oneself has to be conceived outside of all substantial coinciding of self with self."[350] Whereas passivity and activity were, and still are, often interpreted in terms of being explanations for various states of material and ontological entities, the passivity of which Levinas speaks is the passivity of wounding, suffering, trauma. This passivity is qualitatively different than the inability of matter or a thing to act in the absence of a cause, than the absolutely closed aspect of matter that remains wholly within itself, without any capacity on its own for change that does not come from some external cause. Passivity for Levinas refers to being thrown-under, to be compelled to undergo what is painful. This is a much greater passivity than that that belongs to things, which simply sit there, impacted by other things but without being better or worse by such impacts. A thing does not care, is not troubled, if it impacted by another thing. It feels nothing. Effectively, nothing happens, even in the destruction of one thing by another, for things

---

[350] *Ibid.*, 114.

do not care if they exist or not. But the self is different in that it does care; when it passively receives its suffering, it is wounded, pained by this reception. The self must undergo suffering and all the misery entailed by this suffering, which makes the passivity of the sub-ject far more passive than any cosmological passivity. The self must undergo the greatest pain, it must weep and cry. To weep, to be traumatized, is to feel oneself torn asunder, to feel oneself pulled back toward the nothing, to be confronted by one's own nothingness. A thing, even if constituted as nothing in itself, is not directed or open to its nothingness; in contrast, the self finds itself hurled into the nothing by trauma, by the passivity of pain.[351]

This reference to pain points to sensibility, for the pain of corporeality is one of the great paradigms of pain, the physical pain of burns, broken limbs, and the unnerving pain of the stomach or chest, the source of which remains unknown. Sensibility and passivity are inextricably bound for Levinas. The self begins in "the supreme passivity of sensibility, from its vulnerability, its exposedness to the other."[352] Passivity is of the order of sensibility, which in the context of *Otherwise than Being* retains a similar meaning to its usage in *Totality and Infinity*, operating as the corporeally felt receptivity to what is beyond the self. As characterized specifically by passivity in *Otherwise than Being*, sensibility refers to the self as open to the Other. Sensibility is the place in which the self receives itself from the Other, in which it comes to be in its passive openness to the alterity of the Other. The bodily feeling of sensibility has its origins in being exposed to the Other, suggesting perhaps that the self receives its body as the place for the

---

[351] This also implies that the animal in its blindness to its own death lacks the affective depth required for heartfelt tears and weeping.
[352] OtB, 74.

openness to the Other. That is, "[s]ensibility is exposedness to the other."[353] To be

sensible, to have a capacity to feel, emerges from being wholly open to the Other. The

body is the originary place of the relationality to the Other, since the body receives itself

from the Other; as exterior, the body is able to be affected by the Other. Were the self

wholly contained in itself without a body, it would have no way of encountering the

Other in her alterity. To have a body means to be open to the Other. The lived body,

sensibility, is the place of being affected by alterity.

Levinas further elucidates this claim when he maintains that "subjectivity is

sensibility – an exposure to others, a vulnerability and a responsibility in the proximity of

the others, the one-for-the-other, that is, signification…matter is the very locus of the for-

the-other."[354] The material body is space for-the-other, since my body is never private, it

is never merely my own. As a body, it is exposed to the Other's touch. My body is for

the Other, from its inception directed toward the Other as a receptivity to the Other, that

can encounter her in her very alterity. The flesh is the place exterior to me that allows me

to be touched by the exteriority of the Other. By being embodied, I can come to be

responsible for the Other, to fulfill the demands of the for-the-Other. To be for the Other

is signification, which though it has enormous implications for Levinas' philosophy of

language can be here taken in a literal yet still informative sense, of pointing-toward.[355]

To signify is to point-toward something else, for one entity to point to another. In this

case in particular, the sub-ject is constituted as pointing-toward the Other. In this

ostension, "[t]he other calls upon that sensibility with a vocation that wounds, calls upon

---

[353] *Ibid.*, 75.
[354] *Ibid.*, 77.
[355] For a discussion of the importance of signification for Levinas, see the previous chapter in the section on the priority of the Other.

an irrevocable responsibility, and thus the very identity of a subject."[356] The self is

constituted by the passivity of sensibility to living for the Other, which constitutes the

self in its identity. The meaning of the self is to be oriented toward the Other as the one

who grants me myself in my very passivity. Being sub-jected to the Other in passivity is

to be called to respond to the Other, since I become myself in being responsible for the

Other.

Phenomenologically, I suggest, pushing Levinas further than he goes in *Otherwise

than Being*, that this passivity is at its core a nothingness, for I am myself not by being

master of myself, but in suffering the demands of the Other. That is, I do not make

myself who I am; I am not the self-sufficient author of my own existence and identity. In

the beginning, I did not bring myself to myself, but received myself from an Other who

gave me to myself. In other words, I am not my own ground, I do not bring myself into

Being insofar as I am constituted in passivity. Something, more accurately someone, else

grants me my existence and identity. In having received myself, I am not myself; in

myself, I am nothing. This is seen in the basic phenomena of daily life, such as eating,

drinking, or loneliness, but most of all in my relation to my birth and death. I do not

bring myself into Being, I do not keep myself in Being, and I by myself cannot prevent

my inevitable ceasing to have Being. I do not sustain myself, having been thrown into an

existence that I did not choose and condemned to dying at a time that I do not wish. I am

not I; I am only in the Other who is my ground, the Other from whom I have received

myself. As constituted in its passivity, the self is nothing in itself, having received all

---

[356] *Ibid.*

that it is from the Other. The relation of self to Other is thus a relation of nothingness to the Other, the one through whom the self might have Being at all.

For I am constituted as passive, as receiving what I am into myself. As coming from an Other, I am nothing in myself. I can only be open to the Other precisely insofar as I am a nothingness. As nothing in myself, I must await the advent of the Other who then gives me to myself. I exist in the Other. Existence, Being, is at issue in the ethical relation. Only through the Other is there a possibility of ground for the self, of what and who might sustain the self in its existence. But this is an ontological question, not only an ethical question, and one that, as emphasizing passivity, implies a certain understanding of affectivity that Levinas has thus far rejected. As ontological, this suggests Heidegger—who also will turn out to have much to say regarding affectivity.

There does seem, however, to be a tension between the vulnerable passivity of the self in *Otherwise than Being* and the egoist enjoyment of the self from *Totality and Infinity* that I described in the previous chapter. In the earlier work, Levinas characterizes the self as self-sufficient. He states, "[t]he self-sufficiency of *enjoying* measures the egoism or the ipseity of the Ego and the same. Enjoyment is a withdrawal into oneself….[A] vibrant exaltation in which dawns the self."[357] This enjoyment consists in need, where "I can sink my teeth into the real and satisfy myself in assimilating the other."[358] As Levinas says, the human "is happy for his needs."[359] Enjoyment consists in sating one's material needs, in satisfying the impulses of hunger, thirst, and sleep. This satisfying brings the other into the same, assimilates and makes one's own; what is

---

[357] TI, 118.
[358] *Ibid*., 117.
[359] *Ibid*., 114.

outside, food, drink, and raw materials, is consumed and becomes one's own, what makes one herself. A person becomes herself originally through the sustenance gained from materiality, from assimilation, where the other becomes the same. In so taking things into oneself, one experiences happiness and joy. One is happy to have these needs, so that such needs are sated. The person lives from these, and so experiences her own unique enjoyment, thus becoming herself, since she alone is the same who has transmuted what is other into herself. She has experienced this, and revels in it. She exalts herself, becomes an ego. As ego, she takes herself to be self-sufficient and independent. For "[e]njoyment accomplishes the atheist separation; it deformalizes the notion of separation, which is…the existence at home with itself of an autochthonous I."[360] The self supports itself through its process of consumption and assimilation. It exists in itself in its own independence, separated from anything or anyone else in its own world of enjoyment. It is isolated, self-referential, maintaining itself, making itself its own self-sufficient being that is centered on itself, a pure egoism.

How, then, do these two interpretations of the self that on the surface are in tension with one another come together for Levinas? There is a passage from *Otherwise than Being* that helps resolve this tension when Levinas states that "[p]ain penetrates into the very heart of the for-oneself that beats in enjoyment, in the life that is complacent in itself, that lives of its life."[361] For Levinas, there is a moment of enjoyment in the self in both *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*; though the self from the beginning is not actually self-sufficient, having been summoned by the Other to the responsibility that constitutes the self, the self, before actually experiencing the Other, is occupied with itself in enjoyment. The structure of the self is

---

[360] *Ibid.*, 115.
[361] OtB, 56.

thus as follows for Levinas; first, the self is constituted at all by its passivity, its responsibility; then, second, immediately after having been brought forth, the self rests in itself, coils back upon itself in enjoyment and becoming its own distinct being in the atheist separation in which it maintains itself in assimilating the other into the same. Only now, in the third moment, after having been sated with itself, does responsibility for the Other interrupt the self in its enjoyment, the self that now having been separated and wrapped in itself can then be called back to its originary responsibility for the Other for Levinas. That is, "[i]mminence as pain arises in sensibility lived as well-being and enjoyment….[T]he for-another is a despite-oneself."[362] According to Levinas, the self must first be in-itself, be content with itself and have its own possessions, before it can be fully summoned by the Other. After all, a self that possessed nothing, that enjoyed nothing, would seem to be giving up nothing by answering to its responsibility. Only a being that feels pleasure and takes pleasure in itself can be afflicted by the pain that questions the self in its pleasure. Responsibility takes on its greatest meaning for Levinas when the self divests itself of itself, when it abandons its separation and submits to the pain of being-for-the-Other. The enjoyment, then, of *Totality and Infinity* is for Levinas the context of, and perhaps even the precondition for the vulnerable and painful passivity of *Otherwise than Being*.

However, this necessity that the self be first in itself in its own enjoyment of itself before it can become responsible sounds rather Kantian, suggesting another point of contact between Levinas and Kant that indicates that the shadow of Deep Kantianism still hangs over Levinas. In opposition to the requirement that the self first be in the separation of enjoyment before it can become ethical, I contend on the basis of Levinas' first premise that the self is constituted by the Other that this priority of the Other goes all the way down through the self, so that enjoyment is always later than and never the precondition for ethical responsibility. One can feel pain without

---

[362] Ibid., 55.

having felt one's own pleasure. The course of the argument that I have made in this chapter

problematizes the possibility that enjoyment is anything other than derivative and subsequent to

all encounters with the Other. For as this section in particular has suggested, the self in its

passivity is nothing in itself, only exists as itself by receiving itself from the Other. As nothing in

itself, the self never enjoys itself except after it has received its responsibility from and for the

Other. As a result of the nothingness of the self, the self seeks to go outside of itself in openness

to the Other in its desires and needs. The affectivity of the self, I suggest, is a response to its

nothingness and as such is for the Other. Already, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas does note

the lack-based character of need, remarking that "[h]unger is need, is privation in the

primal sense of the word."[363] This need, then, is privation, a lack. Levinas recognizes

that there is an element of lack in need, that it is in a sense a response to nothingness.

However, he does not seem to acknowledge in *Totality and Infinity* the ramifications of

the lack-based origins of need, and only does so in a rather roundabout way in *Otherwise*

than Being in his discussion of the passivity of the self. Since need is grounded in lack, it

indicates and emerges out of the nothingness, the passivity, of the self. The self needs

precisely because it is a nihility. Because the self is not itself, the self must go outside of

itself and passively receive the Other. It is always grounded in what it is not. Prior to all

supposed enjoyment and separation, there is the nothing. Before the enjoyment of

Totality and Infinity, there is the self's nothingness from *Otherwise than Being*, so that

sensible passivity precedes any egoist enjoyment. Phenomenologically, as constituted by

the nothingness that directs me to the Other, my enjoyment is always already interrupted

---

[363] TI, 111. This differs from Desire, which is "not a Desire that the possession of the Desirable slakes, but
the Desire for the Infinite which the desirable arouses rather than satisfies" (TI, 50). When the possession
of a thing satisfies and ends the desire, such desire is not desire but need. Need is sated by its fulfillment,
when the object sought after is possessed.

by responsibility, such that from the beginning, I am not egoist, not assimilating the Other into the same, but rather directed toward being-for-the-Other in responsibility.[364]

Consequently, Levinas's ethics as first philosophy is thoroughly saturated with the nothing, in both *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*. Levinas' fundamental insights into the priority of the ethical relation do not spare him from the shadow of fundamental ontology. The priority of the ethical does not exclude an equiprimordial priority of the nothing, which implies that, at least alongside the Other, there is also the nothing. The Other comes bearing the nothing to me, I who in my own nothing must respond to the Other. This shows, against Kant, that the ontological constitution of the self and the Other as nothing has ethical implications. That is, ontology is not bare, but ethically informative. Though not deliberately on his own part, Levinas provides an ontological clue for overcoming Deep Kantianism. Ethics and fundamental ontology as the ontology of the abyssal nothing come together. Perhaps, then, ethics and ontology are the same. As the same, both are first philosophy.

Yet to determine this requires further investigation of what constitutes the relation between the ethical and the ontological, of how these might be joined. If, however, the self exists in its nothingness, it will be constituted as not self-sufficient, demanding that it must receive itself. It is, as Levinas brilliantly noticed, a passivity, which I have suggested is a passivity of nothingness. But, against Levinas, I maintain that passivity implies felt passion. The self must be passionate, passions through which the self is itself, implying that the self must go outside of itself in its feeling. It has an ontological relation by passion that would also point to an ethical relation, for passion as oriented

---

[364] There is a sense, then, I would argue in which the analysis of the self in *Otherwise than Being* is superior to the corresponding analysis of the self in *Totality and Infinity*.

beyond the self is aimed at the reception of the Other—ethics. To determine this, however, mandates a turn to Heidegger, who by his retrieval of pre-Kantian sources regarding *pathos* offers a path to perhaps overcoming the dichotomy between nature and freedom, being and goodness, ontology and ethics.

Chapter Six
Toward Ontological Affectivity: Heidegger's Pathological Retrieval of a Pre-Kantian Ethos

According to the argument of this study thus far, the two great systems of phenomenological ethics are haunted by the shadow of Deep Kantianism, tainted by a rather non-phenomenological account of the ethical that places the good in a realm divorced from Being. Though phenomenological ethics has made revolutionary discoveries that overturn ancient prejudices, such as the ethically revelatory role of affectivity and the absolute priority of the Other, it has not established these on a phenomenological ground. In pointing toward value or the Other as the foundation of ethics, phenomenology has not justified why precisely either of these are the good. Value, if it is to be anything besides a phantom, must itself be this concrete being before me, suggesting that value is a duplication of terms, as I argued at the end of Chapter Three, while how precisely I am to encounter the absolutely Other, when she cannot impassion me, cannot affect me, remains utterly undetermined. Being remains devoid of ethical implications and the good remains separated from concrete existence. Being is bare, goodness is abstract. Deep Kantianism still presents an obstacle to the task of the successful development of a phenomenological ethics. However, to overcome this obstacle, one cannot pretend that Immanuel Kant did not happen, and simply return thoughtlessly to a pre-Kantian ethics without confronting the challenge that Kant poses. How, if at all, can an ought be derived from an is?

This question can also be formulated as what is the relation between is and ought, Being and goodness? The very relation between Being and goodness, ontology and ethics, must be rethought in a way such that these two terms are no longer dichotomous if

the difficulties of the Kantian divide between nature and freedom are to be overcome. This rethinking of the ontological and the ethical occurs through a rethinking of passion in its ontological character, located in the phenomenological tradition in the work of Martin Heidegger, who suggests an ontologically indicative role for affectivity that in revealing the structures of existence necessarily reveals something about how the person as Dasein is to respond to these structures. Ontologically indicative affectivity occupies the place, perhaps, of being ethically indicative. This rethinking of the ethical within an ontological register occurs in the reading of disposition, mood, and παθος developed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, and *Augustine and Neo-Platonism*. But before showing in the second section of this chapter how the analysis of *Befindlichkeit* and anxiety in *Being and Time* is ontologically informative, I must interrupt the progress of the argument by in the first section clarifying the admittedly somewhat tenuous role that Heidegger plays in the task of developing a phenomenological ethics. In the third section, I will develop how Heidegger's notion of affectivity has its origins in his reading of Augustine, which will be followed in the fourth section by my reading of how this notion of affectivity progresses through Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle. In the fifth and final section, I will articulate the advancement and limitation of the ethical that occurs in fundamental ontology.

An Interruption of the Path to an Ethics

In the First Chapter of this study, though I problematized this rupture between is and ought, attempting to show that any ethics that presupposes the is-ought dichotomy both prevents the good from having a concrete source and relevance and thus also strips

Being of any capacity to speak about how one should live, I did not show how movement to an ought from an is would be possible, how the ought is grounded in the is and how the is intrinsically implies the ought. I have said nothing positive in this regard, and insofar as I have argued that Max Scheler and Emmanuel Levinas retain this Kantian framework, retain the presupposition of bare Being and abstract goodness, I have thus far not moved the analysis in a positive direction. Though Scheler and Levinas made great discoveries, the conclusion that I have most fully argued for is that these discoveries remain within the context of the framework of Deep Kantianism, the divide between nature and freedom, being and goodness, that threatens to strip being of worth and ethical implications while placing the good in an isolated void that lacks relevance to daily life.

If, then, phenomenological ethics is to progress, and if, as I have argued, the dichotomy between is and ought leads to untenable conclusions, then the dichotomy itself must be thought anew. If beginning with the assumption of an abyssal chasm between Being and goodness fails to ground ethics, then perhaps the abyssal chasm itself should be questioned. One should, perhaps, begin rather with the unity of goodness and Being, with the possibility that from the beginning, the ontological implies the ethical and the ethical is grounded in the ontological. Yet if the ethical emerges from the ontological dimension of concrete existence, then the character of the ethical would be radically other than what has been suggested by Kant. The ethical would no longer be duty alone against passion and Being. Instead, the ethical would somehow relate to how one exists among the various exigencies of daily life.

This points to a pre-Kantian and even pre-Cartesian notion of philosophy, in which philosophy itself, as therapy, intrinsically involves dealing with the concerns of

life in its overtly ontological investigations. Since philosophy in this view that I have discussed in the Introduction to this study must heal the soul, it must be ethical. The thinking of ethics is not of a separate, distinct philosophical discipline among others, but a thinking that approaches ethics in its primordial meaning as dealing with the concrete affairs of dwelling in a world. To avoid pretending that Kant did not happen, one would need to appeal to a philosopher who is after Kant, but one who also seeks to think more radically what came before Kant. Where this post-Kantian but also pre-Kantian source might be located has already been hinted at in the last chapter, which suggested that Levinas' ethical relation is permeated by the abyssal nothing, by what is an ontological concern. If the passivity of *Otherwise than Being* fundamentally indicates the nothingness of the self in its reception, its feeling of its responsibility for the Other, then somehow affectivity also would be intertwined with the ontological, in that the self has Being at all through the felt passion of and for the Other.

This all suggests that ethics must be thought radically in connection with its ontological character, or in what would constitute the retrieval of a pre-Kantian ηθος that was conducted in phenomenology by Martin Heidegger in his "Letter on Humanism." There, he writes, "[t]he saying of Heraclitus goes: *ethos anthropoi daimon*…Ethos means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which man dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to man's essence…to appear."[365] Heidegger is attempting a phenomenological reading of the term ηθος, seeking to recover its originary sense that emerges from the contexts of daily life. The most basic meaning of ηθος is that of character; but to what exactly does one's character refer? What is character?

---

[365] "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 256.

Ηθος signifies the abode or dwelling place, according to Heidegger; that is, ηθος signifies that with and for which one lives. Concretely, one's ηθος refers to the singular things, persons, and the world in which one lives, entities that as particular shape who one is. The events of life shape character; character is intrinsically related to the space in which one dwells, to this friend, this book, this graduation, this job, this death or sickness. Thus, "[i]f the name 'ethics,' in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ethos*, should now say that 'ethics' ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who ek-sists, is in itself the original ethics."[366] Insofar as the ethical is oriented toward the place in which the person dwells, toward her relation to the world, it is concerned with the ontological. Since the person is open to the world and her place in the world, she is open to Being, an openness in which she is the clearing of Being. Ethics for Heidegger refers to how the person dwells with Being as the one who is open to Being. Fundamentally, the person is constituted as the openness to, the clearing of Being, so that how she is to live is determined by this orientation toward Being. She is to comport herself in such a way that she might be open to Being, living so that she might be the place for the manifestation of the event of Being. The person, then, "is the shepherd of Being."[367] Heidegger thus presents a rethinking of ethics that gives it an ontological character; how I should live is answered by my orientation to being open for Being.

---

[366] Ibid., 258.
[367] Ibid., 234.

According to Jean-Luc Marion in this rethinking of ethics "Heidegger…attempts to think *ethos* more radically than metaphysical ethics had thought it."[368] Similarly, Francois Raffoul has stated that originary ethics "seeks to capture ethics in relation to being itself," where the person is "called by be-ing, needed by be-ing."[369] The good, understood in an ontological sense, requires that the person is receptive to Being, that she lets Being be. Dasein is the one who must respond to the demands of Being, demands that constitute the core of the new originary ethics. In the words of Jean-Luc Nancy, "Dasein is the Being responsible of/for Being itself."[370] Heidegger's originary ethics is defined by the person's inescapable role as the shepherd and guardian of Being, of the one who is to think Being through letting Being be. The good is for the person to be the place for the clearing of Being. Yet this is a good that is left entirely unclarified by Heidegger, who also does little to specify how letting Being be addresses the challenges of heartfelt existence in all of its trauma and wounding.

That is, is Heidegger's rethinking of ethics in terms of ontology really the place to look for the overcoming of Deep Kantianism? This appeal to Heidegger seems to be problematic on two counts. First, Heidegger's originary ethics appears to not be an ethics at all, since as oriented solely to Being, it excludes what is normally considered central to an ethics—the relation of the self to the personal other. How a person is to live with and act toward others remains utterly overlooked. The injunction to be open to Being is empty of content; how precisely being open to Being is supposed to inform one's

---

[368] Marion 2002, 31. Jean-Luc Nancy describes Heidegger's ethics almost identically, writing that originary ethics "thinks of *ethos* as the conduct of/according to the truth of Being" (Nancy 2002, 78). See also Dastur 2002, 87.
[369] Raffoul 2010, 220, 280.
[370] Nancy 2002, 75.

concrete ethical life is not given. Making oneself the space for Being does not necessarily indicate anything about how one cares for, or does not care for, the other person. How can comporting myself so that I might be the clearing of Being indicate how I am to live my life such that I can respond to the demands of other persons on the terms of these other persons? Though Raffoul suggests that through Dasein's openness to Being, it "is opened to intraworldly entities, to the other Dasein, and to the entity that 'I am.' The very concept of Dasein thus includes a responsibility to the other, namely…to the other Dasein," and Nancy observes that "the activity of opening, or of opening oneself" "essentially implies 'Being-with-one-another' as its 'foundation,'" neither Raffoul nor Nancy explain in depth how the place of the self as the shepherd of Being can reveal the good of, for, and within the practices of daily life that deal intrinsically with others.[371] Both Raffoul and Nancy leave these connections between openness to Being and openness to the Other undeveloped, and do not take this interpretation of Heideggerian ethics significantly beyond concern for Being. Concrete foundations for how the person is to live her life are thus still absent. The actual character of her responsibility to the Other as suggested by Raffoul remains entirely ignored by Heidegger.

Second, and emerging from the context of the lack of a decisive movement from the guardian of Being to the heartfelt care for the Other, is the fact that Heidegger simply never develops an ethics in his early fundamental ontology or later thinking of the event of Being. For whereas both Scheler and Levinas develop systematic ethics, Heidegger seems to focus solely on Being. This would appear to suggest that Heidegger's work at

---

[371] Raffoul 2010, 258; Nancy 2002, 72.

best lacks ethical relevance and at worst is an unethical totalization that excludes the Other, violently reducing alterity to the same, a charge that has its fullest formulation in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*. Heidegger opens himself to this charge when, for instance, he states in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* that "[t]he basic question of philosophy, the question of being, is in itself, correctly understood, the question of man," and as such is "prior to all ethics."[372] The ethical is preceded by the ontological; ethical questioning is subsequent to and derivative from the questioning of Being. Ethics and the ethical relation have no place in Heidegger's thought insofar at the latter is wholly occupied by the thinking of Being that would be covered up by ethical and similar secondary questioning. Besides for the purpose of repudiation, Heidegger's place in a study of phenomenological ethics seems unwarranted.

These two objections, though they certainly offer a pointed and fundamentally correct critique of the practical character of a later Heideggerian originary ethics, conclusively show neither that Heidegger's earlier philosophy is in fact in opposition to an ethics nor that his early philosophy does not contain its own originary ethics that Heidegger himself only recognized after *Being and Time*. The apparent opposition that Heidegger mounts against ethics is not against the possibility or importance of the ethical as such, but rather against ethics as it has been misconstrued so often in the history of philosophy, especially subsequent to Descartes and culminating in Kant, as an artificial system of abstract rules and precepts. Heidegger's criticism is aimed at ethics insofar as ethics has been objectified as a system of abstract norms and values that are detached from life and Being. Heidegger notices in his early 1921-1922 Winter Semester lecture

---

[372] *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 16-17.

course *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, "[s]omeone could devise an absolute system of morality, a system of ethical values and value-relations that are valid in themselves, and yet…remain blind to objects and relationships which actually appear regularly in living morality, i.e., in facticity."[373] An ethics that is constructed out of values or that attempts to provide an abstract system of rules will not capture the core of ethical experience. This normative experience is found only in facticity, in the richness of concrete life in the world. Heidegger's charge here takes aim at Scheler's own value ethics that posits the rank and order of values as the source of normativity; values and their relations for Heidegger amount to simply another instantiation of the present-at-hand, a reification that removes itself from the conditions of lived experience. Values would be isolated in their own world, divorced from the concrete persons and entities of existence, preventing values from having anything to say about how one should live life within the situations of dealing with other persons. Consequently, as Heidegger notes in the 1928 lecture course *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, "the concept of value, having a necessary function within set limits, derives from the same traditional metaphysics, whose real ontological foundations are unclear and ungrounded."[374] At its core, value lacks a decisive engagement with the ontological, failing to find its ground in the jointure of Being. Through having refused the ontological as its source, value has set itself off and thus cannot inform the concerns of daily life. Value is abstract. An ethics that is a code of law or order of values would be, in Heidegger's terms, blind to the demands of dwelling in the world—a charge that is similar to the one that I have articulated against Kant and Scheler previously in this study. Heidegger is correct to be

---

[373] *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, 124.
[374] *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 184.

suspicious of values, which as not founded in the structure of existence as given in lived experience amount to a foreign imposition upon life.

In rejecting ethics in its abstract, life-denying sense, Heidegger by implication would be establishing the possibility for a new ethics that is open to the exigencies of daily existence; precisely in his elaboration of the question of the meaning of Being that is attuned to lived experience does Heidegger present the possibility of an originary ethics that belongs to the early lecture courses leading up to and including *Being and Time*. This originary ethics is not identified as an ethics by Heidegger since it is not simply a systematic discipline among equal disciplines, but is always already interwoven in the fabric of fundamental ontology, which is itself ethics in its fullest incarnation. Against Taylor Carman's claim that Heidegger's inadequate account of the ethical is "bound up with his more general failure to understand ethics as a proper branch of philosophy," I argue that the strength of Heidegger' approach to ethics consists in his rejection of the disciplinary approach to philosophy.[375] The problem that has confronted philosophy since Descartes is that it has been separated into distinct disciplines that do not overlap or inform one another, which has the effect of separating the respective objects of these different disciplines so that, in the particular case of the good and Being, the good and Being must be thought as distinct, without reference to the other. As James Reid has observed, "Heidegger repudiates disciplinary distinctions in philosophy."[376] Not only is there no basis for the claim that the disciplines of ethics and ontology must be separated, but also, if Being and the good are intertwined, then ethics and ontology themselves must be united.

---

[375] Carman 2007, 269.
[376] Reid 2019, 200.

Recently, Reid in *Heidegger's Moral Ontology* has argued that for Heidegger, the "realm of fact [is] 'always already' permeated by value....On the early Heidegger's view, the very distinction between a realm of fact and a realm of value distorts our experience of a world of things that matter."[377] Heidegger challenges the dichotomy between fact and value, both in its general form that is popular throughout much modern thinking and also more particularly in its formulation by philosophers such as Scheler. Lived experience does not present values as distinct from facts, does not present abstract values or facts devoid of implications for meaning and worth. Rather, in lived experience, prior "to the gulf between them [facts and values] opens, and before we begin to wonder where to place our values, if not in a world of mere fact, we already find ourselves in a world of worthwhile things."[378] The things, others, and events of the world always appear as meaningful, as implying something about how I am to act with respect to them. From the beginning, they impose demands upon me to which I must respond, demands that originate precisely in the character of these entities being the singular entities that they are. The existing entities of the world, in their givenness as beings that manifest the ontological structure of reality, bear about themselves a requirement to respond, to deal with them in a way that recognizes that they matter in their demands upon me.

That is, Heidegger is developing the thesis that "there is no conception of being without a conception of the good, and no conception of the good to be defended without a conception of what things, including human beings, can be said *to be*."[379] Reid suggests that for Heidegger, especially the early Heidegger that is the focus of *Heidegger's Moral*

---

[377] Reid 2019, 12.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid., 18.

Ontology, Being and goodness are inextricably intertwined, having an inherent jointure in which both are mutually informative of the other; the good must be founded in the conditions of existence, while Being speaks to how one should live. The good is not and cannot be a mere abstract value. In Heidegger's own words, "the αγαθον undergoes a characteristic process of deterioration even into the present age, where it is determined as *value*."[380] Within modernity, there has been an incorrect tendency to reduce the notion of the good to that of value, which is juxtaposed with the concept of the fact. When reduced to value, the constitution and basis of the good entirely disappears, a deterioration in response to which Heidegger seeks to restore the fullness of the good, at least in ontological terms. As Reid notes, "Heidegger works in detail with the good in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as an ontological category in SS 1924, on the basic concepts of Aristotelian philosophy."[381] Since the early Heidegger is the place in which he retrieves earlier notions of the good on the path of the development of fundamental ontology that itself arises from an analysis of concrete lived experience, the early works including *Being and Time* and the preceding lecture courses should offer the basis for an originary ethics in Heidegger. This originary ethics, as grounded in the richness of daily life, I suggest presents both the fullest rethinking of the relation between goodness and Being in phenomenology and is also the best place to find the resources that Heidegger leaves behind that might be developed into an ethics.[382] Thus, I will in what follows in this

---

[380] *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, 212.
[381] Reid 2019, 18n43.
[382] Though arguably the most frequent reading of Heidegger's ethics has been the one that begins with his statement of an originary ethics in the "Letter on Humanism," to which the text admittedly lends itself, another frequent reading appeals to the early Heidegger regarding care. However, those accounts that appeal to care either remain underdeveloped or culminate in a phronetic reading of care that turns out to be empty at its core. Among the former number the accounts of Joanna Hodge and Francoise Dastur. According to Hodge, in her *Heidegger and Ethics*, "[t]he possibility of an ethics is conditional on the existence of an entity, for which being is an issue. This entity is the site of a lack of determination, the site

of a nothingness, out of which there emerges ethical questioning and the possibility of freedom" (Hodge 1995, 202). This especially clear formulation states that only through openness to Being does the person become ethical in the first place; without the care for one's own Being that thereby opens the self to Being, including the Being of other entities, responding to the demands of others in terms of the ethical would be impossible. Dastur has made a comparable argument, suggesting that out of a "hermeneutics of care" one can find in Heidegger, in particular in the call of conscience, an ethics; for in the call, a person is passive, and is not activity making herself be called (Dastur 2002, 89). The call does not originate as any act of volition. Thus, the call "inscribes alterity in the very heart of the self" (ibid., 93-94). That is, care as involving the call of conscience involves necessarily a relation to the alterity of others, allowing for the emergence of the ethical. Arguably, the most notable formulation of this reading that grounds Heidegger's ethics in care has been made by Steven Crowell, who writes that "Dasein as a being in whose being that very being is at issue" is oriented toward its Being, which indicates that it must "take over being a ground," or seek a foundation, revealing "the condition that enables me to act not only in conformity to norms...but also...to be responsible, 'beholden' to normative constraints and so offer reasons (grounds) for what I do" (Crowell 2007, 322). In other words, as open and directed outside of herself toward Being through care, the person is able to choose certain actions over others. The openness to Being is the source of normativity. This overall interpretation of Heidegger's ethics recognizes, quite rightfully, that Dasein, as caring for its own Being is an openness in which Dasein is also open to the world and the other person. Crowell in particular has sought in *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* to take this reading of care further than it has by Hodge and Dastur, attempting to say more about how exactly care founds an ethics in terms of phronesis. In *Normativity and Phenomenology*, Crowell, advancing his thesis from 2007, argues that as the consequence of Dasein's being open to norms through care, "all deliberation – including moral deliberation – is possible only within the norms of a practical identity and so within a historically specific 'world' or culture" (Crowell 2013, 301). Moral deliberation that determines what is right and wrong requires norms, which themselves assume a practical identity in the world, a world that Dasein is open to through care. This moral deliberation consists in phronesis that "always remains tied to concrete practical identities, since these alone provide the necessary 'ends' or standards of success or failure" (Crowell 2013, 303). Examples of these identities include "[b]eing a lawyer, being a carpenter, being a father, teacher, lover, or friend" (Crowell 2013, 287). However, these examples and Crowell's frequent example of being a writer (see 279) are not helpful; though certainly what I am to do is bound with who I am, who should I be? Crowell's reading of Heidegger' care structure has said nothing about what life is actually the good life, what life one should choose; that is, who should I choose to be? As Crowell himself admits, "[i]f Dasein's being is care, then no specific 'good for man' can be specified, since what it is to be such a being is always at issue" (Crowell, 301). That no good for man can be specified does not follow from the premise, though, that the Being of the human being is at issue. For this neglects the possibility that there is an inherent direction or motivation of care, or an inherent ethical claim latent within the care structure that points to a definitive course of action. After all, if one takes even the most readily apparent approach, that what is at issue for Dasein in care is its own Being, then this Being would constitute the good for Dasein, thus motivating care. Already, this offers more concrete suggestions regarding the good life than Crowell's interpretation has provided, an interpretation that has not at all actually established what would guide or inform how I should live my life and who I should seek to become. Crowell's account has not explained how the particular norms that actually guide daily life—charity for others, caring for one's children, rescuing the drowning child—have become norms. Why should I be a doctor or a teacher or a father at all, let alone a good one? These are more than historically conditioned society norms; the particular norms of any given society arise from a certain ground, one which Crowell has altogether ignored, leaving the question of the concrete good life undetermined. Any ethics that fails to answer this question seems to me to fail to be an ethics, and were Crowell correct in his phronetic account that limits the care structure to practical reasoning, Heidegger would be the wrong place to look for an ethics. In this similar phronetic approach, Lawrence Hatab has suggested that "Heidegger's ontological phronetics of presence and absence can be shown to operate in ethical thinking and practice, as a balancing act that is indigenous to ethical finitude. For example, phronetics can negotiate a balance between self-regard and other-regarding empathic concern" (Hatab 2002, 263; see also Laurence Paul Hemming 2005, 64-65). Practical wisdom balances between various competing claims, leading to an ethics of the mean. One seeks to weight appropriately different claims. However, this phronetic account seems, as I have already indicated, to be empty; what determines one's phronetic decisions? What are the principles that inform

chapter seek to develop a latent notion of the intertwining in affectivity of Being and goodness in *Being and Time* and its origins in Heidegger's early lecture courses on Augustine and Aristotle. In this sense, I am going beyond Reid's ontological account that neglects the "ethical salience" of "mood, attunement, and *Befindlichkeit*."[383] Though Reid certainly provides an illuminating description of the location of the ethical in Heidegger, he does not address the role of affectivity, which to me seems to be the space for the unfolding of the ethical, a claim that I have already suggested in this study in the chapters on Scheler in particular. For if affectivity is how the person encounters what and who is other, how she encounters the world and even herself, then the affective would be the foundation for the unity of the good and Being.[384]

Befindlichkeit*, Anxiety, Being-toward-Death*

 In *Being and Time*, affectivity as *Befindlichkeit* takes a central role as the result of its ontological implications, a role that Heidegger was arguably the first in phenomenology to grant to what he called disposition and mood. In general, I follow Daniel Dahlstrom's use of "affectivity" as an "umbrella term for disposedness, moods,

---

phronesis? Such principles are either external or internal; if external, then they have a source outside of phronesis itself, meaning that phronesis is not the standard or source of these principles, and so not itself the source of normativity. If internal, then these principles must be innate to the structure of phronesis; but if this structure does not exist by itself, instead existing by a ground outside of itself, then it is empty if not for this ground—making its principles once again external. The person, as not self-sufficient, as existing by an Other, would even in her phronesis then seem to be dependent upon her relation to these others, to an external ground and principle beyond phronesis, so that phronesis can never be the standard or source of ethics. In itself, phronesis is wholly empty, meaning that any phronetic reading of Heidegger will not be adequate.

[383] Reid 2019, 216.

[384] There is also a school of thought that seeks to establish a Heideggerian ethics on the basis of Being-with, which is an obvious place to look for an ethics, given its clear relation to the other person, an interpretation that deserves due consideration, which I will revisit in the section of this chapter on how affectivity relates to Being-with in Heidegger's retrieval of Aristotle.

and emotions" as these appear in Heidegger.[385] Disposition as *Befindlichkeit* and mood

as *Stimmung* can be described as at their core a part of a fundamentally affective aspect of

existence. The domain of "affective phenomena" that refers to those features of

experience that are broadly called one of or a combination of "emotion, feeling, passion,

affect, and mood" is "extensively covered" by Heidegger, who has perhaps more than

anyone else sought to investigate the realm of feeling on its own terms.[386] Affectivity

refers to phenomena as concrete and transformative as anxiety, fear, anger, love, joy,

pleasure, hate, desire, sorrow, and more, tendencies and characteristics of lived

experience that are fundamentally felt in what Augustine identifies as the heart. The

affective domain that for Heidegger includes mood and disposition is, I will thus argue

following Augustine, the place of the heart, of heartfelt passions that constitute and

define the person in her Being.

Heidegger begins his analysis of this concrete domain of affectivity in *Being and

Time* with the ubiquity of its phenomena. At the beginning of §29 on *Befindlichkeit*,

Heidegger writes that "[w]hat we indicate ontologically by the term 'disposition'

[*Befindlichkeit*] is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood [*die

Stimmung*], our Being-attuned [*das Gestimmtsein*]."[387] Before interpreting this passage

regarding what it says about affectivity as such, what Heidegger means by the relation

between ontological and ontical should be noted. The ontical and existentiell for

Heidegger refers to the concrete, existing singular entities and events of daily life, to this

---

[385] Dahlstrom 2019, 111.
[386] Christos Hadjioannou, "Introduction," x, in *Heidegger on Affect*.
[387] *Being and Time*, 134. Here I follow Joan Stambaugh's translation of *Befindlichkeit* as disposition, though otherwise I use the Macquarrie and Robinson translation; throughout this chapter, I will in general prefer disposition, though at times will modify this translation further according to the progression of the argument. When this occurs will be readily apparent.

person, this thing, this feeling, to what is actually experienced directly.[388] The

ontological and existential refers to what allows for these particular existents in the first

place; that is, the ontological is the underlying existential structure that is the condition

for the possibility of ontical experience.[389] The ontological is that by which things are,

the little 'is,' Being, the structure or ground of what is. With this clarification in mind,

Befindlichkeit, disposition, is the underlying ontological or grounding structure that

allows for and manifests itself in *Stimmung*, in daily felt moods that range from moods of

fear, to boredom, to anxiety.

      Befindlichkeit for Heidegger thus refers in concrete daily lived experience to

Stimmung, to moods. One's disposition has a fundamental relation to one's mood, or

how one generally feels, the current affective situation in which one is in. That

Heidegger associates disposition with mood makes sense; for *Befindlichkeit* has the

connotations of the person finding herself, indicating that she is passive. She did not

place herself into the current felt situation, but found herself in such situation. As

Dahlstrom observes, in moods and emotions "we typically find ourselves swept up into

them and the worlds enveloped by them…implying something suffered or undergone…a

passiveness, the opposite of activeness."[390] That is, "we do not and did not ourselves put

ourselves into the situation, into the world in which we exist; instead we find ourselves

(*sich befinden*) in it. Finding ourselves in it is part of what it means existentially to be

disposed."[391] Moods characterize these situations that come upon the self in daily life, in

that disposition refers to how one is with respect to the world, how the self feels itself to

---

[388] Ibid., 13.
[389] Ibid., 12.
[390] Dahlstrom 2019, 106.
[391] Ibid.

stand with respect to the world. In being disposed toward something, the person is

inherently passive, since the relation with something else from the beginning indicates

that the person, to have a relation with this thing, must be open to this thing, must be

disposed toward the thing such that the thing as the thing enters into her. This positions

her with respect to the thing; were the person wholly active in experience, then all that

she encounters would be constructed and constituted by her. Disposition means to

passively receive that thing, that existent, that is other than the person. This implies, as

Heidegger noted in the above passage, that there is an inherently ontological dimension to

moods and dispositions, so that *Befindlichkeit* points to one's Being-attuned,

Gestimmtsein. This is one's Being-mooded, one's Being-affected so that one comes to be

in a certain disposition. One is in a certain mood, having a certain disposition or

affection.

Mood for Heidegger is neither merely random nor able to be dismissed as an

accidental feature of Dasein; instead, it describes the deepest levels of the being that is

Dasein in its Being. For "[t]he fact that moods can deteriorate and change-over means

simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood."[392] The supposedly fleeting

character of moods and affections that has been so often used in the history of philosophy

as an excuse to exclude mood from consideration hardly counts as evidence against the

significance of mood. Rather, that moods can at times frequently change at a moment's

notice only shows that there is always a mood. The person always experiences a mood,

so that, even when a mood quickly disappears, it is immediately replaced by another

mood. Affectivity cannot be condemned to irrelevance simply because it changes, for

---

[392] BT, 134.

though it changes one constantly has moods. That one is always beset by moods, even if these particular moods vanish, says something about the person, that she cannot be without mood. Even "[t]he pallid, evenly balanced lack of mood, which is often persistent and which is not to be mistaken for a bad mood, is not nothing at all. Rather, it is in this that Dasein becomes satiated with itself. Being has become manifest as a burden."[393]

When a person denies that she has a mood, when one claims to not be feeling anything in particular, this is actually itself a mood. Precisely because this mood is relatively weak, is it possible to claim that one does not have a mood. But a mood is one's disposition, how one finds oneself in the conditions of her existence. She is in a certain way being-affected, impassioned, even if these are mild affections. There is always a general way in which one feels, including that of not feeling much at all. Not having a mood is itself a mood. The apparent absence of mood in fact indicates that the person is closed off from being significantly affected by existence, which betrays how she stands with respect to existence—that is, a mood or disposition that still disposes the person with regard to existence. This relative dullness of feeling itself suggests something, specifically that a person encounters her existence as a burden. Her feelings are weak in that she is unable to feel strongly, having been overwhelmed by the exigencies of existence. She has lost, albeit only temporarily, the general ability to have strong feelings in that she lives a tiresome existence that has sapped her of her strength. Heidegger in his analysis of *Befindlichkeit* in *Being and Time* is attempting to rethink the domain of affectivity as it has so often been misconstrued in the history of philosophy;

---

[393] Ibid.

like Scheler, he recognizes that affectivity operates in a fundamental capacity for the person. Both Scheler and Heidegger wish to overcome the ancient prejudice against the affective by showing that the heart at its core is saying something. However, unlike Scheler, Heidegger maintains that the structure of affectivity that grants it its significance is not to be located in value, in an abstract domain that is divorced from things, but in the ontological character of the dispositions and moods that are related to the concerns of daily existence, an affective domain that with Augustine I identify as the heart, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Heidegger argues that affectivity is at its core an ontological phenomenon in which

> [a] mood makes manifest 'how one is, and how one is faring.' In this 'how one is,'
> having a mood brings Being [*Sein*] to its 'there' [*da*]. In having a mood, Dasein is always disclosed moodwise as that entity to which it has been delivered over in its Being; and in this way it has been delivered over to the Being which, in existing, it has to be.[394]

Heidegger's use of the passive tense is revealing. Moods are not what one does, but what happens to someone. In occurring to the passive recipient, moods indicate something about the very Being of Dasein. Being is an issue for Dasein as a result of its moods, which show that Dasein has been delivered over, passively, to its Being. Mood opens Dasein to Being, to the domain of the ontological, without which any ontological inquiry would be impossible. When Heidegger states that moods "make manifest 'how one is,'" he means how one is with respect to Being itself, that is, ontologically. As Heidegger makes clear in his 1924 article *The Concept of Time*, known as the Dilthey review, Dasein "*is* its ownmost characteristic 'that it is' in the ontological mode of finding itself

---

[394] *Ibid.*

in this state [*Befindlichkeit*] and the possibilities that lie in it."[395] To find oneself, or to be

placed in a situation in which one is disposed toward other entities, is fundamentally

ontological. In its disposition, the self as being with respect to other beings feels or is

affected by these other beings that are received by the self. The self passively receives,

feels, how it stands with respect to beings, revealing that the way in which other beings

are encountered at all is affectivity itself. Affectivity is the condition for the possibility

of the openness to Being. Only a being that can feel, that can be receptive to what is

other than itself, can be open. In this openness, the person has no say. She never chose

to be open to Being, or to exist as the being that must confront its existence. The person

is wholly passive in her moods. As passive, this implies the *passio*, the 'I suffer,' of

passion, of undergoing and receptivity—of receiving an other.

This is not primarily a bodily sensibility or passion, but what I call a heartfelt

passion. Against Niall Keane, who claims that affects are concerned with "embodied

beings," I locate Heidegger's affectivity in a place distinct from and not constituted by

corporeal flesh.[396] Without attempting to enter fully into debates surrounding the

question of the role of embodiment that have characterized much contemporary

phenomenology or disparaging the discoveries of the significance of the body, I argue

that when Heidegger speaks of disposition or mood in particular and affectivity in

general, the affective occurs not primarily in the flesh but in the heart. The heart, a

notion first developed by Augustine and later taken up by Medieval mysticism and

recently by Scheler, as was discussed in the present study in Chapters Two and Three, is

not material. It does not consist in a relation established by the corporeal body. That

---

[395] *The Concept of Time* (Dilthey Review), 35.
[396] Keane 2019, 56.

which is signified by the term heart is an originary openness, an openness to what is other as other rather than as what is merely the same. For any merely sensible relation, a relation that occurs through only the bodily senses, through the flesh, would fail to be an actual relation. As consisting in the body so-called sensible relations would be wholly material. But the material as such is closedness, the domain of isolated atoms impacting atoms, without any regard for or openness to one another. To be open means that an entity tends beyond itself, tends toward what is other as other, directed toward that which is other, what this entity does not itself contain within itself. Yet the flesh *qua* flesh, as material, can never tend outside of itself. Only through its relation to the heart can the flesh ever have sensation, only through the heart can the flesh encounter what is other. Yet as conditioned by the heart, the flesh is not itself openness or the feeling of the other; the felt reception of the other occurs through the heart alone. The heart is that which receives and tends toward what is exterior to the heart, a reception that as passive is passion. This passion is heartfelt and not grounded in the carnal flesh since it refers instead directly to some sort of alterity that is beyond the self. Passive openness to alterity is found in the heart rather than the body or the sensations of the body; the frequently observed absence of the notion of embodiment in Heidegger, especially in *Being and Time*, is deliberate on Heidegger's part. The language of embodiment are inadequate to describe the phenomena that Heidegger denotes by his terms *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*, which point to an openness to the relations of alterity that would otherwise be altogether covered up by the vocabulary of carnality and the body. Relationality ,which is always relationality to alterity, can only be characterized by disposition, by affectivity, by what Augustine calls the heart. Even if Heidegger does not

use the term heart in his theory of the passions, he still is pointing to a heartfelt domain in

his employment of *Befindlichkeit*, the passive finding oneself in a situation with alterity.

Though Heidegger in no way clarifies this alterity in *Being and Time*, as we will see

below in the Fourth Section, he does at least begin to discuss this alterity in more detail in

Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy, even if there he still does not decisively

engage with alterity as such.

Similar to Levinas in his account of passivity, Heidegger is careful to distinguish

his notion of *Befindlichkeit* as affectivity from the duality of activity and passivity that

descends from earlier ontologies. Affections are not mere accidents of some substance,

or the result of various sensible impressions; in contrast, mood "comes neither from

'outside' nor from 'inside,' but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such

Being."[397] Disposition and mood is not some internal state, as suggested by Hume and

Kant, or something divorced from the Being of the person. On Heidegger's analysis,

which seems to me to be fundamentally correct, the felt domain of affectivity or mood

occurs precisely in the unity of the person with the world that is the phenomenon of

Dasein. Originarily, there are neither subjects nor objects, but only Dasein, the being

who exists in and among other beings. Mood occurs precisely from the person being

related to others, to that which is exterior to her. As arising from Being-in-the-world,

affectivity is oriented toward the things, others, and situations that constitute daily life.

How one relates to things, how one stands with respect to things, is characterized by the

affective. Affectivity assumes that one is being-affected by something other than the self,

that there are separate entities that come into contact with the self, that enter into the self,

---

[397] BT, 136.

who is in such exposure open to the alterity of these entities. Only a being that is in the world and can experience what is not itself can experience moods, or as I would suggest, can experience the meaning of being a heartfelt being. Mood is thus the concrete relation with other things and persons.

Affectivity has priority over other ways of encountering the things of the world; Heidegger writes that "ontologically mood is a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior to* all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure."[398] The self encounters itself primarily as an affective, mooded being that is open to experiencing other entities. Cognition and volition come only later, after an initial affective moment in which the self finds itself being affected by other entities. One can only know or will if one has an object of knowing or willing, if one has first encountered something other than oneself that operates as a object for the self, if one is the passive recipient of an object that only then can one act upon in thinking or willing. For "[e]xistentially, a disposition [*Befindlichkeit*] implies a disclosive 'submission' [*Angewiesenheit*] to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us. Indeed from the ontological point of view, we must leave the primary discovery of

---

[398] *Ibid*. One might be tempted to object to the priority of mood, given that immediately before this passage cited here, Heidegger states that "[f]actically, Dasein can, should, and must, through knowledge and will, become master of its moods; in certain possible ways of existing, this may signify a priority of volition and cognition" (BT, 136). However, this in no way states that knowledge and will are prior to affectivity, since the claim that the self can or should master its moods presupposes the givenness of moods and passion in the first place. There is nothing in this passage that contradicts the originary role of affectivity before all will and knowledge. All that Heidegger is saying here is that moods can and should be cultivated, a claim that is at least as old as Aristotle. One should foster the good moods that come upon the self, facilitating these and helping to ensure that passions are properly directed, while resisting those bad or evil moods that one might feel, a resistance that is itself done on the basis of passion itself. As Heidegger himself states, "when we master a mood, we do so by way of a counter-mood; we are never free of moods" (BT, 136). Cultivating passions, so-called mastering moods, occurs precisely through a conflict of moods, through the intertwining and interacting of the passions. By mood itself, one promotes a mood and resists another mood. When Heidegger discusses becoming the master of mood, he in fact affirms even more fully the absolute priority of affectivity over all other characteristics and tendencies of the person. Even one's will and knowledge require mood to inform and motivate them so that they can master, cultivate, another mood.

the world to 'bare mood.'"[399] An affective disposition, an attuned finding-oneself,

involves necessarily being submitted, or being passive to and thus dependent on, the

entities of the world. This passivity is to such an extent that Heidegger goes so far as to

say that the primary discovery of the world is the result of bare mood, that is, mood

without any cognitive, volitional, or corporeal impositions upon it. What Augustine, and

I following him, would call the heart, before all knowing, reveals the world to the self, a

world that matters to the self in its capacity for feeling the world.

The use of the term submission, *Angewiesenheit*, makes even more clear why

Heidegger adopts passive language throughout his treatment of affectivity, why he

associates *Befindlichkeit* with mood, and why he grants the term *Befindlichkeit* such a

fundamental position. *Angewiesenheit* has connotations of being dependent on or relying

on something else's support, a situation that demands that the self submit itself, passively,

to its dependence on what and who is other. This passive receptivity of the self is felt, as

affective, since to be affected at all is to be moved by an other. As Heidegger has already

made evident, disposition is mooded, attuned, or affective; that is, a disposition manifests

its ontological character ontically through being felt in *Stimmung*, which implies that one

in feeling is feeling an other, since all feeling is at its core passive. In being passive,

Befindlichkeit itself captures the structure of affectivity. *Befindlichkeit* is finding-oneself,

where one finds oneself in a situation, one finds oneself feeling a certain way passively in

the world. Through its having been constituted by an ontological disposition or openness

to the world, the self feels this openness in its affectivity and passion   This would seem

to possibly imply that *Befindlichkeit* would be best translated in *Being and Time* as

---

[399] *Ibid*., 137-138. Translation slightly modified.

254

passivity or even passion. *Befindlichkeit* is passion itself. However, the evidence for this claim remains unclarified in *Being and Time* itself. Only through reading Heidegger's retrieval of Augustine and Aristotle, a reading that I will conduct below in the following sections of this chapter can the requisite support be provided to justify translating *Befindlichkeit* as passion for Heidegger. What can be said for now is that *Befindlichkeit* as concretized in *Stimmung* is felt, it is mood; though mood refers to a general affective stance in which a person currently finds herself that pervades all of her being, this pervasive felt stance is fundamentally a mode of passion. For passion at its core, phenomenologically, is the felt receptivity or openness of the self to the other, of which mood is a variant that characterizes the person as a whole in her Being, and not merely with respect to a single object that is revealed in a single emotion. When passion is understood as not a mere psychological state, as not a momentary attribute that obfuscates the clarity of rational thought, or as wholly internal to the self without reference to the world, but as the receptive openness of the self to the world that joins the self with the world in a way that both the self and the world become disclosed, that is, passion in its true meaning as the felt passivity of what is other, it clarifies rather than obstructs what Heidegger means by *Befindlichkeit*.

The receptivity of this passion is ontological. In Heidegger's own words, "Dasein's openness to the world is constituted existentially by the attunement of a disposition."[400] Passion is the feeling of reality. In *Befindlichkeit*, disposition, I feel the things, persons, and situations of the world that are existence itself. As Heidegger has already shown, though, the case is not that I first am, and then find myself having a

---

[400] *Ibid*., 137. Translation slightly modified.

disposition of the world. Rather, I am, I exist, precisely in feeling the world in disposition, in passivity. My existence begins as a felt openness to the things of the world that are beyond me yet also constitute me. For I only am on the condition that I am open to the world, such that I am in being-in-the-world. I am openness to world itself, an openness that is inherently passion insofar as it is passively receiving the entities of the world into myself. I am myself through being passionate openness as such, in being directed toward the world. Dasein is the orientation itself to the world. Consequently, passion, as neither internal nor external, signifies unity with the world. Passion is what binds me to the alterity of the world, a binding through which I am.

This ontologically revelatory place of affectivity for Heidegger is best exemplified in *Being and Time* in its analysis of anxiety. He writes, "[t]hrownness into death reveals itself to Dasein in a more primordial and impressive manner in that disposition which we have called 'anxiety.'"[401] The person is directed toward her death, of which she becomes aware through the passion, the feeling, of anxiety. Anxiety is itself a specific feeling in which the person finds herself confronted by death. That is, anxiety "amounts to the disclosedness of the fact that Dasein exists as thrown Being *towards* its end. Thus the existential conception of 'dying' is made clear as thrown Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being."[402] The feeling of anxiety at its core is constituted by how it reveals an ontological situation, in particular the ontological situation of death, of the always impending, apparent annihilation of the self. This structure of anxiety in particular helps illuminate the structure of affectivity in general for Heidegger; every emotion or passion has an intentional structure, in which feeling is feeling of…, feeling is

---

[401] *Ibid*., 251. Translation slightly modified.
[402] *Ibid*.

always the feeling of something, disposition nis disposition toward… an object that is disclosed by a particular feeling.[403] Object should not be taken in a narrow sense, as being of this or that particular thing. This is demonstrated by anxiety itself, which, by revealing Being-toward-death, has for itself the nothing as its object; but of course, the nothing is not an object at all. It is nothingness. Yet, anxiety is still for Heidegger directed toward this nihility, indicative that this nihility is encountered in the felt intentional structure of affectivity.

Thus, like Scheler, Heidegger maintains a theory of intentional affectivity, though unlike Scheler, Heidegger locates the object of this intentional affectivity in the concrete things and others of experience rather than in values that are categorically distinct from worldly entities. Even though *Befindlichkeit* also becomes apparent in anxiety as directed toward the nothing, affectivity remains ontologically directed, for the nothing is itself a constitutive ontological dimension of existence. If anything, the orientation toward the nothing further confirms the ontological character of affectivity for Heidegger. As John Caputo notes, "Heidegger actually gave unprecedented importance to the affective sphere."[404] Far more than Scheler, Heidegger analyzes in great detail the structure of affectivity as intentionally oriented to the ontological affairs of existence. Further departing from Scheler, this intentional structure of affectivity is not characterized by act; there is no act, no ray of intentional affectivity, that begins by traveling out from myself

---

[403] By stating that *Befindlichkeit* is intentional, I do not mean intentional in a specifically Husserlian sense, a sense that Heidegger finds problematic. What I mean by intentional is the general notion of being in experience directed toward something, the tendency toward something as implied by its Latin roots in *intentio*, stretching, attention, from *intendo*, to stretch, to aim, to direct. Thus, what I am calling the intentionality of disposition in Heidegger, a passive, receptive stretching toward the world that is always already directed toward the world, is the originary meaning of intentionality, prior to any Husserlian constitutive sense that assumes the givenness, the passivity, of tending-toward.
[404] Caputo 1994, 336.

as distinct from an object then allows the self to encounter this object. Intentional affectivity is instead constituted by *Befindlichkeit* as passivity, as fundamentally a receptivity. That is, the intentionality of affectivity that is developed in *Being and Time* does not first extend outward from the self, but first originates in the object that appears within the jointure of Being and enters into the self. This means that the self is in a way by affectivity open to the Other, for the movement of affectivity begins in the Other, in feeling the Other, a feeling that is not an action but a reception. As receiving this Other, the self is thus directed outside of itself toward the Other; the so-called intentional act becomes an intentional re-act, though even to say re-act still implies too much on the side of the self. If anything, this account emphasizes more than any other the specifically intentional character of affectivity, the *tentio*, the stretching, the stretching outward away from the self in a motion that does not originate in the self. Intention demands necessarily that it be a stretching toward something, that it be a response to an object. Only through the encounter with an other object is intentional affectivity possible at all. The self is moved outside of itself, encountering what is other than itself, in intentional affectivity, in being open to an other. To stretch out from oneself demands that one have received an object toward which one can then be stretched and directed. In receiving the other into itself, the self is moved outside of itself toward this other. The self encounters this other as existing in feeling this other in intentional affectivity. Heidegger adheres to an ontologically indicative intentional affectivity, a notion of affectivity that begins to be formed in his retrieval of Augustine in *Augustine and Neo-Platonism* and is then brought to its culmination in his reading of Aristotle in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*.

However, before exploring these origins of Heidegger's affectivity, I should note what is meant here by the term ontological; when I refer to affectivity as disclosive of ontological situations, I do not mean that affectivity has somehow revealed Being, *Sein*, itself to us, as if Being were simply another object among others. By 'ontological,' I refer to what Heidegger identifies as "[a]ll the structures of Being which belong to Dasein, together with the phenomenon which provides the answer to this question of the 'who', are ways of its Being. To characterize these ontologically is to do so existentially."[405] Within the context of this study in particular and Heideggerian affectivity in general, affectivity as revelatory of ontological situations refers to the structures of Being that belong to or are encountered by the person as Dasein, the ways in which the person concretely exists. This ontological inquiry is fundamentally existential, concerned with the concrete conditions of daily life. Most significantly, "[b]y 'existentiality' we understand the state of Being that is constitutive for those entities that exist."[406] The ontologically disclosive role of affectivity reveals the ways of Being that constitute the person in her very existence; the affective, the passionate, reveals Being insofar as Being here refers to the structures of Being that constitute the person so that she might exist at all. How she exists, her way or mode of Being, is revealed by affectivity. Being as a whole is not revealed, but Being as it is manifest in its constitutive structures that give existence to the person is what is meant by the phrase that I have developed in this chapter that 'affectivity is indicative of ontological situations,' which perhaps best characterizes Heidegger's theory of affectivity. This affectivity is not itself

---

[405] BT, 114.
[406] Ibid., 13.

259

Being, but stands as separately as disclosive of Being, of the ontological, the place or horizon where Being might perhaps show itself.

The Augustinian Origins of Passion

Prior to examining the text of *Augustine and Neo-Platonism*, continuity between the notion of affectivity in this text and the notion of affectivity in *Being and Time* should be established; that Heidegger is talking about the same range of phenomena in both texts is a prerequisite for tracing the path of the development of *Befindlichkeit* as it appears in the 1927 treatise. This possibility, along with the possibility that Aristotle alongside Augustine also plays a role in the development of affectivity, is first indicated by Heidegger in a footnote in *Being and Time*. Heidegger explicitly acknowledges the joint Augustinian and Aristotelian heritage of his notion of care: "[t]he way in which 'care' is viewed in the foregoing existential analytic of Dasein, is one which has grown upon the author in connection with his attempts to interpret the Augustinian (i.e., Helleno-Christian) anthropology with regard to the foundational principles reached in the ontology of Aristotle."[407] As emerging from the confrontation of Augustine and Aristotle, a proper understanding of care in Heidegger would require one to follow the path of how care sprung from these ancient and medieval origins. For care, as having its sources in Augustine and Aristotle, will even if only latently retain the impressions of these sources, impressions that may have not been intended by Heidegger. Affectivity, intertwined with the overall structure of care for Heidegger that itself as care always

---

[407] Ibid., 199n7

burdens itself with anxiety about that for which it cares, will thus also have its origins in Heidegger's retrieval of Augustine and Aristotle.

Though this clue points the way back to Heidegger's early lecture courses and writings leading up to *Being and Time*, it alone does not quite solidify the relation between the *Befindlichkeit* of the 1927 treatise and whatever notion of affectivity that might be located leading up to *Being and Time*. The fundamental clue that establishes the continuity between *Being and Time* and the earlier works is provided by Heidegger in his 1924 lecture to the Marburg Theological Society, *The Concept of Time*, where he translates Augustine's *affectio* into German as *Befindlichkeit*.[408] *Affectio* is translated into English as manner of being affected or influenced by something else, in noun form as *affectus* is translated as condition, disposition, or feeling, and of course is the root of the words affection and affectivity. This means that Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit* emerges directly from an encounter with Augustine, who thus stands as the first source of Heidegger's theory of affectivity, suggesting that this theory should be understood within the context of its Augustinian origins.

In the 1921 Summer Semester lecture course *Augustine and Neo-Platonism*, Heidegger states concerning Augustine's discussion of desire and temptation that for persons, "there will always be something which they desire."[409] Desire is directed toward something, not a thing in a scientific, calculative sense, but in the sense of a concrete being, situation, or state of affairs that is the object of desire, object in the sense of a goal for desire, that which itself is desired and as the object is the source of desire. This implies an ontological character of desire in its direction toward an existing object.

---

[408] *The Concept of Time*, 6.
[409] *Augustine and Neo-Platonism*, 152.

Heidegger further explains that desire takes place within care, where care "has a relational sense which changes in the historical-factical complex of life. It is enacted as *timere* and *desiderare*, as fearing (retreating from) and desiring (taking into oneself, giving oneself over to). The *multum* is the manifold, the many significances in which I live."[410] In 1921, care is understood in the Augustinian terms of fear and desire, both affects; fear and desire are the tending away from and tending toward, directed toward certain ontological situations. These situations are those that have significance for the self, who responds to them with desire or fear. When the self encounters the things, others, or events of the world, it either responds to them with desire, seeking to have them and tend toward them, or with fear, in which the self avoids and tends away from these things. Every fear or desire is a fear of… or desire for… something, of or for something that matters, that affects the self in its meaningfulness. For Heidegger, around the beginning of his development of the notion of care, care is at its core an affective response to the world that is ordered by whether something is desired or feared by the self. Phenomenologically, the self tends toward the desirable or tends away from the fearful, toward or away from the enactment of definite possibilities. The desirable is tended-toward, stretched-toward by the self precisely because, for Augustine, there is something good about it with respect to the self, something that makes it desired at all, while the fearful is something bad with respect to the self. Care is movement, a striving toward or away from something, meaning that at its core, it is constituted by an affective response that moves the self to respond to the exigencies of life. This suggests that care involves a moment of passion. There is in care an affective, felt character.

---

[410] *Ibid.*, 153.

However, note should be made that in his reading of Augustine in 1921, Heidegger does not invoke the notion of the good that is behind Augustine's theory of the passions, in which desire is for the possibility of the good and fear is for the possibility of the bad. Ultimately, Heidegger interprets Augustine so that fear and desire are about the significances of life itself, which is to say for Heidegger the concrete character in which factical life experiences its world. That is, affects are concerned with the beings that surround the self, and these affects link the self to these beings. This affective link is precisely what binds the self to the world so that there is Dasein. By employing the terms significance and *multum*, Heidegger is able to point toward the ontological character of affectivity in which fear and desire as modes of care are always aimed and directed at the intentional objects that are revealed in feeling and to which the person responds with her feelings, objects that are, of course, not identified here as good or bad by Heidegger. For the appearance of a notion of the good in his lecture courses, we must turn to his retrieval of Aristotle.

The Aristotelian Origins of Passion

Heidegger completes this reading that emerges from Augustine of affectivity as ontological in his retrieval of Aristotle in the Summer Semester 1924 lecture course *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*. Once again, continuity should be established between Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit* from *Being and Time*, Augustine's *affectio*, and now also Aristotle's terms for affectivity, so that a clear line may be traced from Augustine through Aristotle to *Being and Time*. The necessary continuity is provided by Heidegger when he writes that "παθη 'affects,' are not states pertaining to ensouled

things, but are concerned with a disposition [*Befindlichkeit*] of living things in their world, in the mode of being positioned toward something."[411] Since this is an important passage on multiple counts, I will revisit it later in this section; for now, what is most relevant about the passage is that *Befindlichkeit* is associated with παθος, in which the latter is identified as being fundamentally a disposition, a *Befindlichkeit*, of the self that relates it to the world, analogous, perhaps, to the relationship in *Being and Time* between *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*, disposition and mood. Specifically, *Befindlichkeit* for Heidegger does not literally translate παθος into German, but rather translates διαθεσις. This is made clear when Heidegger states that "[t]he ηδυ, the 'supporting' is encountered by way of διαθεσις, 'disposition' [*Befindlichkeit*], in such a way that it cultivates a definite disposition [*Befindlichkeit*]."[412] Though *Befindlichkeit* as such translates διαθεσις, it is inherently intertwined with the notion of παθος, such that παθος is the way in which one finds oneself disposed in *Befindlichkeit*. Finding oneself is a παθος, in English, a passion. Theodore Kisiel, in his monumental study *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time, notices the passionate character of *Befindlichkeit* in the 1924 Summer Semester Aristotle course when he states that "pleasure…will continue to be the basic disposition (διαθεσις, *Befindlichkeit*) of human life."[413] Pleasure is, of course, a passion or affect. Kisiel provides the following significant observation that "*Befindlichkeit* (disposition, disposedness)…elaborate[s] the situated character of life, how I find myself (*mich befinden*), it receives its precise sense (and optimal translation) from its Aristotelian equivalent, διαθεσις, in SS 1924, in the Greek lexical context which

---

[411] *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 83.
[412] Ibid., 38.
[413] Kisiel 1993, 295.

also relates it closely to the passions."[414] Though *Befindlichkeit* refers explicitly to

διαθεσις in *Basic Concepts*, the range of phenomena covered by *Befindlichkeit* includes

the term παθος, which therefore can be understood as a precursor and origin to the notion

of disposition and mood in *Being and Time*.

The possibility of continuity between Aristotle and Augustine is also supported in

a way by Augustine himself, who in the *City of God* translates Greek παθη with Latin

affectio.[415] This allows Heidegger to trace a direct path from Aristotle's παθη and

διαθεσις through Augustine's *affectio* to his own *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*.

Fundamentally, all three of these philosophers are referring in these terms to the same

range of what Augustine identifies as heartfelt phenomena, including feelings as

indeterminate as a dull mood, as fleeting as a momentary emotion, as burning as enraged

anger, and as overpowering as flaming love. As I will argue is the case in the following

section, Aristotle, as read by Heidegger, alongside both Augustine and Heidegger

himself, contributes to a theory of the passions in which feelings are intentional,

ontological, and disclosive. Most importantly for the purposes of the present study, in the

disclosure of ontological situations, passions also disclose the ethical situation of the

good, through revealing what is conducive for the Being of the self. In being oriented by

passion to its own Being, the self discovers the good. Passion, παθος, disclose

simultaneously Being and the Good, which are co-given and revealed by feeling.

These revelatory "παθη 'affects,' are not states pertaining to ensouled things, but

are concerned with a disposition of living things in their world, in the mode of being

---

[414] Ibid., 492.
[415] *City of God*, 9.4.

265

positioned toward something."[416] Heidegger here translates παθη, passions, as affects,

showing a continuity between these terms that lends further evidence to my claim that

Befindlichkeit can be translated as passion. Passions are not merely internal, isolated

qualities that inhere in the substance of the self without relation to anything else, are not

solipsistic phenomena that exist in themselves.   Instead, passions exist at all through

their relation to some exterior object or situation. In being related to this exteriority,

passions are pointed toward something. That is, the "primary being-oriented, the

illumination of its being-in-the-world is not a *knowing*, but rather a *finding-oneself* that

can be determined differently, according to the mode of being-there of a being."[417] In

this finding-oneself, "παθη characterize the entire human being in its *disposition in the*

world."[418] These passages brings together what later becomes in *Being and Time*

ontological *Befindlichkeit*, *disposition*, and ontical *Stimmung*, mood or attunement. At

the time of the lectures of *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger

intertwines παθη, passion, or mood, with finding-oneself, suggesting that disposition is

fundamentally passionate, which supports my claim that *Befindlichkeit* is best translated

as passion in *Being and Time*. The disposition, the finding-oneself of *Befindlichkeit*, is a

passion, in that it is a receptivity of the world into the self. The self passively receives

the world into itself that constitutes the tending of the self tends outside of itself,

revealing the world to the self that experiences the world in terms of feeling this world.

As Heidegger states, παθη, passions, characterize the entire person in her disposition;

indicating that disposition, *Befindlichkeit*, the reception of the world, is a felt

---

[416] Ibid., 83.
[417] Ibid., 176.
[418] Ibid., 129.

phenomenon. Since the person only is constituted as being-in-the-world, and this being-in-the-world itself occurs through passion, then the person exists through passion itself. Affectivity is the very existence of a being that finds itself in the things of the world, so that affectivity binds the self to things. Dasein is related to and directed toward things precisely insofar as it is an affective being that responds to these other beings. Being-in-the-world, the most basic, constitutive structure of the self, is felt in the passions. Passion is being-in-the-world itself, where passionate finding-oneself directs the self toward the various entities of the world.

These passions that reveal the relation of the self to its world are divided into two basic categories of pleasure and pain. Heidegger states that

> In φωνη, just as in λογος, a definiteness of being-in-the-world appears, a definite manner in which the world encounters life. This occurs, first, in the character of ηδυ and λυπηρον, and in the second case in the character of the 'beneficial and harmful' (συμφερον, βλαβερον)…the world is there for the most part in the mode of the beneficial and the harmful, of that which uplifts or upsets being-there.[419]

When he comes to Aristotle after Augustine, thus encountering Aristotle with an Augustinian lens, Heidegger reads desire and fear even more ontologically, referring back to what is perhaps their phenomenological origins in pleasure and pain, respectively. Pleasure and pain are beneficial and harmful; what is pleasurable is beneficial, while what is painful harms. The feeling of pleasure shows what is conducive for the self, and the feeling of pain shows forth what is detrimental for the self. When the world is encountered as beneficial, this benefit is disclosed to and thus known by the self through the feeling of pleasure; correspondingly, when the world is experienced as harmful, this detriment is disclosed to the self through the feeling of pain. In both cases, what is

---

[419] *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 34.

beneficial or harmful refers to the Being of the self, in the sense of what allows the self to exist at all, the ground of the self. The beneficial or conducive and the harmful or detrimental to the Being of the self is that which sustains or threatens the self in its existence. The conducive ensures that the self remains in Being, that the self is open to Being so that the self *is*. Heidegger does not at mean that the pleasurable as what reveals the beneficial to the Being of the self that somehow the beneficial is beneficial for Being itself; for Being is of course not a being, and thus cannot feel anything at all, or be sustained or harmed. Rather, the beneficial felt in pleasure is what supports the self, that is, what keeps the self in Being. The self is held in Being by the beneficial, and likewise removed from Being by the harmful. By relating the self to what is beneficial and harmful for its Being, pleasure and pain indicate how the self stands with respect to the things of the world, revealing these things as uplifting or upsetting for the self. Pleasure and pain have an innate relation to the things of the world, existing as passionate, affective, disclosive responses to entities, and only occurring as the result of the finding-oneself, the reception, of such beings. Thus, the passions of pleasure and pain are hardly isolated in themselves, locked in the self as Levinas would claim. What is beneficial is beneficial to the self in its Being, uplifting the self, in contrast to the harmful that upsets the self in its Being, threatening to extinguish the self from the domain of Being. The affect of pleasure indicates, points toward, something that sustains Dasein itself. Affects are fundamentally revelatory, disclosive not only of the self but also of the world in its relation to the self, which is to say, the self as unified with its world. The world is revealed by affectivity in terms of its significance for the Being of the self, which is possible at all since the affairs of the world are indicated by affectivity. A situation is

268

encountered by the self in terms of what this situation does for the Being of the self, where every situation, even if only to a minor extent, will promote or hinder the self in its Being. Ontological situations are themselves made manifest through the affective. These ontological situations, as relating to the beings of the world, will include encounters with both material things and persons. Being-in-the-world means to encounter entities that are not only reducible to the status of manipulable things.

This manifestation of ontological situations therefore implies that the "affects play a fundamental role in the determination of being-in the-world, of being-with-and-toward-others."[420] In relating Dasein to its world, affects relate Dasein to others and show how Dasein is positioned with respect to other persons, and not only how the self is positioned with regard to things. Dasein is related to others through the affective, suggesting that being-with, as present in *Being and Time*, is an affective category. Heidegger states that the "world's character of being-there is such that the relationality of its there is precisely toward several that are with one another. This world that is initially being there for several that live with one another, we designate as *surrounding world*."[421] The self does not only encounter things in the world, but the Other, to use Levinas' term, or in Heidegger's vocabulary, other Dasein. It encounters these others as with the self, for these others rather than being inert things are beings who are always *with* the self. For Heidegger, that a being is *with* the self, and not merely a tool ready-to-hand, is indicated by speaking, in which the self speaks to others who themselves speak to the self. The self does not speak to things, which thus simply surround the self as things to be manipulated and utilized, indicating that the mode of the Being of the self and the Other will be

---

[420] Ibid.
[421] Ibid., 34.

distinct from the mode of Being that belongs to things. Consequently, here in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger goes so far as to remark that "the being of the human being is speaking with the world—expressing itself, speaking with others."[422] The Being of the person itself, becomes manifest in the speaking of the person, so that she is constituted in her speaking. Though she speaks with the world, what this means is precisely that she speaks with the others of the with-world in particular, the *Mitwelt*, the world of other human persons.[423] For one does not speak to a thing, one cannot carry on a conversation with a thing; speaking necessarily occurs with, to, and for other persons. To be a person inherently means to speak to others, and if the Being of the person comes upon her through speaking, then she has her Being at all through the Other with whom she speaks. Speaking being indicates being with others, and most importantly reveals that being with others is the most primordial relation, for speaking being assumes the givenness of the Other, assumes being-with. That is, "the phenomenon of the being-there of human beings as such possesses *equiprimordially speaking-being and being-with-one-another*."[424] The originary status of speaking being establishes the equally originary status of being-with, which consequently turns out to be the constitutive relation of the self. The self as Dasein is comprised at its core by being-with, by the Other.

This speaking-being points back toward the priority of affectivity on the basis that "the παθη are not merely an annex of psychical processes, but are rather the ground out of which speaking arises."[425] The person speaks at all because of passion, which moves her

[422] Ibid.
[423] *Cf. Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 27, 43.
[424] BCAP, 45.
[425] Ibid., 176.

to speak. Finding oneself passionately involved with the world by affectivity, receiving the world and the Other into oneself, is what allows for language in the first place. Speaking requires not only content about which to speak but also a motivation to speak. One can only speak or deploy words if there is something about which to speak, a content, a referent that words signify, a content that is given through having been received in affectivity; and further, one can only speak if one has been motivated to speak by passion, if one is drawn outside of herself toward an Other with whom she speaks. Before speaking is possible, the self must have been moved outside of itself to express itself to an Other, which occurs from the foundation of passion. The relation with the Other, as dependent on speaking that emerges from the basis of passion, is itself thus dependent on passion. This would indicate that the Other is revealed through affectivity.

This indication that the relation of being-with to the Other is an affective relation is confirmed by a brief comment from the 1929-1930 Winter Semester lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* that "[a]ttunement is not some being that appears in the soul as an experience, but the way of our being there with one another."[426] Attunement, *Stimmung*, often translated as mood, the ontical correlate of ontological disposition, *Befindlichkeit*, is precisely the way in which the self exists with the Other. The relation to the Other—what Heidegger calls being-with—is encountered through the affective domain. One *feels* her relation to the Other. This feeling or affectivity is not simply any random feature of the self, since "attunement is the originary way in which every Dasein is as it is."[427] The person is her moods; she exists as an affective being, indicating that her relation to the other will occur within the context

---

[426] *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, 66.
[427] Ibid., 67.

of mood. I am related to the Other through affectivity. For the self, as constituted by being-in-the-world, will also at least in part be constituted by its being-in-the-world with others, its being-with. The self is comprised by its relation to what and who is Other, a relation that as mooded is one of passion, as described by Heidegger in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, signifying that which is passively undergone by the self. Yet, since the self is fundamentally in its Being speaking-being and this speaking is always already for the Other who speaks, then the self is more fundamentally constituted by who is Other rather than by what is Other. The Other with *whom* I dwell gives my Being to me through my passionate relation to her. In my passions, I am moved by alterity, constituted by my affective finding-myself before the Other whom I by receiving into myself compels me to speak to her, to respond to her. Similar to Levinas, for Heidegger, the approach of the Other, being-with, occurs through speaking with alterity. What Heidegger notices that Levinas misses, though, is that this speaking to the Other, as a response to the Other, is inherently a reception of the Other into myself, an undergone passion for the Other. I must feel, receive, and be open to the Other before I can speak to her at all. Passion is the jointure with the Other on the basis of which speaking, saying, and language is possible at all.

If the self exists by its felt relation with the Other, then the self has its Being from the Other. Passion itself is felt, as Heidegger has already indicated, as pleasurable or painful, as what is beneficial or harmful to the self in its Being, what sustains or inhibits the existence of the self. Pleasure and pain are ontological categories. According to Heidegger, the "encounter-character" of the pleasurable and painful "for the being of human beings is the character of the beneficial and the harmful, taken together: what is

272

conducive and what is good."[428] Passion is revelatory of those ontological situations that promote or impede the self in its existence. That which is conducive to the existence of the self Heidegger identifies as that which is good. The person encounters those things, others, and events that promote her Being as good. In other words, the good is constituted by its relation to the Being of the self, where what is good is what sustains Being, disclosed through the passion of pleasure. Just as affectivity reveals how one stands with respect to beings and Being, it thus also reveals how one stands with respect to the good. For what is conducive and beneficial to the self, to Dasein, constitutes what is good for the self. In Heidegger's own words, the "world…is there in the character of αγαθον, that is, of συμφερον."[429] For the world and the things of the world to be encountered by the self, involves a certain notion of the good, a notion of the good that Heidegger in his reading of Aristotle identifies as the συμφερον, the beneficial, conducive, or advantageous. What is identified as good is identified as such precisely on account of its beneficial character for the sake of the self in which the good sustains the self in existence. That is, the good is defined by its relation to the Being of the self.

By relating the good to Being in his retrieval of Aristotle's notion of the good, Heidegger ontologizes the good, rendering it concrete in contrast to abstract value or law. The αγαθον is "a particular mode of the being-there of those beings with which we have to do in πραξις."[430] As a mode of the self in its Being, the good is connected to the ontological. It is not anything abstract or empty, but is constituted as a way of the existence of the self where the self *is* in certain way. Heidegger remarks that the "αγαθον

---

[428] BCAP, 37.
[429] Ibid., 44.
[430] BCAP, 207.

is not an objective thing buzzing around, but instead is a how of being-there itself."[431]

Thus, the good is founded in the things with which one deals in the πραξις of daily

concern, such that the good is a distinct way of Being for the self. To be good or even to

seek the good assumes a certain comportment, a way of living that as in the world means

that one acts and conducts oneself in a specific way with respect to things, events, and

persons.

This way of living, "[t]his standing-out of the human being, this 'comporting-

oneself' in the world, this 'comportment,' is το ηθος."[432] The ethical begins with how

one is affectively disposed and comported toward other beings as other beings, that is,

insofar as these beings have Being. The foundation and source of normativity is thus

located in ontology, in Being and beings. Through dealing with concrete things and

others, the good emerges as a distinct way of being of the self. There are certain relations

that one seeks to have in concernful dealing with entities, relations that are good.

Heidegger states, "[e]very concern has tendency in itself; it is after something, directed at

an αγαθον that is always there."[433] Dasein's concern is not arbitrary or random, but

develops from striving, desiring a particular good. Dasein in its practical affairs of life is

always oriented toward the accomplishment of some good, some end. For "[c]oncern is

not something different than, and so only accidentally, a being-after" that "belongs to its

[the self's] being itself."[434] In its concernful dealings with the world, the self is

inherently motivated, is moving toward some goal after which it strives. The self as itself

is defined by this end, this good, that it seeks to possess or to even become. All of the

---

[431] Ibid., 49.
[432] Ibid., 48.
[433] Ibid., 72.
[434] Ibid., 47.

concerns of the self are determined by the movement of the self toward the good that is the end. The good is an end, a τελος. The τελος is also ontologized by Heidegger; "[t]he τελειον is a determination of the αγαθον," which has "a peculiar relation to being-completed."[435] Τελος for Heidegger does not merely mean end. For something to be the end is for it to complete the being, to bring a being to the fullness of its Being. An end is aimed at, is chosen, precisely insofar as it is founded on how it is the completion of a being. In his gloss of Aristotle's discussions of the good as such, Heidegger states that

> what is presumably asked about is the character of being-an-end, of finitude (*Endlichkeit*), the τελειοτης, insofar as the αγαθον is τελειον, insofar as it constitutes being-completed. The ultimate question is: which way of being of human beings is it that suffices for the τελειον ακροτατον?[436]

The ultimate end, the chief good, will be what completes the human being in a specific way of her Being. As marking her finitude, her completion, the way of being that belongs to the final good would be what brings the person to the fullness of her existence. In being brough to completion, she is brought into the meaning of her Being, where she most fully exists. For to be completed is for a being to most fully realize itself in its existence. The good is constituted as what brings the self into the fullness of its Being, what uplifts the self in its Being so that the self is. That which completes would be what uplifts and is conducive, indicating that the good is that which allows for Dasein to fully enter into its Being. But, this leaves undetermined precisely what it is completes the self. Specifically, which way of Being brings the self into its Being? To answer this question with 'the chief good,' neglects to clarify which concrete comportment to the events and others of the world constitutes the chief good. Given the structure of

---

435 Ibid., 58.
436 Ibid., 48-49.

affectivity that Heidegger has provided, whatever would constitute the specific final good would be revealed by a certain disposition; this good, as beneficial, would be disclosed through some sort of pleasure. Pleasure will reveal the good, including and most of the chief good, to the self. This chief good, as what brings the self to the fullness of Being, will be that which most sustains and constitutes the self in its Being, the ground from which the self exists. There should, then, be a pleasure or joy that is associated with the primary ground of the self. The self, constituted in its Being by speaking-being, is constituted by the Other. This would hint at a passion or pleasure for and from the Other, a hint that Heidegger himself offers: "being-in-the-world as being-with-one-another by the ηδονη, [is] that which relates itself to an encountered ηδυ and to another, and indicates it to another."[437] The encounter with the other person occurs most fundamentally in the mode of the ηδονη, in the mode of the pleasurable. Just as how one stands with respect to the world as conducive is characterized by pleasure, how one stands with respect to the Other is characterized by pleasure. Insofar as *Being and Time* agrees with the basic earlier structure from Augustine and Aristotle of ontological, intentional, and disclosive affectivity, then the existential category of being-with will have a corresponding affectivity that specifically reveals the conducive character of the Other for the Being of the self, that demonstrates how the self finds its ground in the Other person. Being-with as a constitutive relation for the self should have its own proper pleasure that is distinct from all others, having an intentional relation to the Other that is given and disclosed to me by this passion. This would suggest that the Other is

---

[437] Ibid., 35.

somehow involved in Dasein's completion, since to be Dasein assumes that Dasein is

always already with the Other.[438]

---

[438] The possibility that being-with, as the relation to the Other person in Heidegger, could operate as the foundations for an ethics has been often noted, given its rather obvious ethical implications on the basis of the intuition that the ethical has in some way to do with the relationship to others, that the ethical life somehow involves dealing with others on their own terms rather than one's own. There is a significant body of literature that develops a Heideggerian ethics in terms of being-with. Among those who have interpreted Heidegger in this way include Jean Greisch, Frederick Olafson, and Michael Lewis. Greisch goes so far as to state that "we ourselves are determined through a Being-with the other" (Greisch 2002, 101). Dasein exists at all through the Other. Insofar as being-with as an existential constitutes Dasein, the Other too constitutes Dasein. The person is through the Other. Greisch has certainly opened the path to fruitful research; if Dasein has its Being in part through being-with, then somehow being-with is much closer to Levinasian alterity than has often been suggested. However, he does not fully develop the argument for the constitutive character of being-with, leaving much unsaid. Another scholar who focuses on being-with, Olafson, in *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: A Study of* Mitsein, argues for a complementarian reading of being-with, where "the complementarity to one another of our choices and actions and those of other human beings" is the standard for good and bad (Olafson 1998, 55). As sharing a world and sharing such a world with others, an action of the self is justified insofar as it "serves the general good" (Olafson 1998, 56). There is a communal character to human life, where each person is to acknowledge the claims of other persons as her equals. But Olafson's reading of being-with fails, since, in his own words, the other is "an Alter Ego" (Olafson 1998, 56). This ignores that for Heidegger the whole point of being-with is that from the beginning, the moment that Dasein is thrown into existence, it is characterized by being-with. That is, Dasein is constituted by the other Dasein. A person is always already bound with and joined to the Other who is not simply another self, but a constitutive existential character of Dasein. Ontologically, this means that the fact that a person exists at all depends on being-with the Other. She is herself from the Other. Olafson's reading supposes that somehow, there is a solitary self, an ego, that then in being-with encounters an alter ego, another self. For as constituted by the Other, the person is not merely herself, an ego, with her own egoist interests and desires that are not those of the other; she is already outside of herself in being-with. She is not merely herself, but other than herself, indicating that she is not juxtaposed against the other person in being-with. The constitution of the self by the other in being-with reveals that the question is not of a complementarity, a sharing with the other. For insofar as the self is through the other, her actions are to be oriented to the other. Being-with is not mere equality; Dasein, as constituted by what is not its own, has a prior orientation to others that cannot be captured by complementarity or sharing, as what is required of Dasein is to recognize that it is through the other Dasein. Lewis has offered one of the more distinct readings of being-with, claiming that "the place of ethics is the ontological difference," the difference between Being and beings, which is located in the "with" of being-with" that is "the togetherness of being and beings itself" (Lewis 2005, 1, 2). According to Lewis, the difference between Being and beings is intertwined with the problematic of being-with, since Being and beings, even if different, are always "intimate with one another," pointing toward a certain place of being-with that brings Being and beings together (Lewis 2005, 3). Dasein, as the clearing of Being, would be the between, the being-with, that stretches between Being and beings so that they can be with each other (Lewis 2005, 3, 4). However, Lewis' claims not only remain textually unsubstantiated, but also are troubled by tenuous assumptions throughout his text, including that the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity maps onto the categories of for-the-sake-of-which and in-order-to, respectively (Lewis 2005, 20), or that there is a hard distinction between "*two forms* of birth and *two forms* of death. One form is the *actual fact* and belongs to *man*, while the other is the *existential response* or relation to this fact…[that belongs to] Dasein" (16). Yet, the obvious authentic relation for the person with regard to those things that are ready-to-hand is that of the in-order-to, since these tools are used in order to achieve some further end, and one authentically relates to another Dasein as a for-the-sake-of-which. This is enough to show that the categories of authenticity and inauthenticity do not line up with those of the for-the-sake-of-which and the in-order-to; were I to treat a thing as a for-the-sake-of-which, then I would have an inauthentic relation with this thing. To be authentic, to be one's ownmost proper self, means something more and different than

Dasein, as joined to the concretely existing persons, things, and events through passion, itself exists through these. The person is in her feeling, her passion, of what and who is Other. In particular, she is in Being-with-one-another, implying that, insofar as others are Other, that she relates to them through a passionate jointure. She has a passion, a *Befindlichkeit*, in which she receives the Other through whom she has Being. This Other, as granting her Being, would signify the limit, the τελος, of her existence, what is proper to and completes her, the ultimate end. She would be uplifted by her passion for the Other who gives her Being to her. Consequently, there should be a passion of pleasure that is the result of the Other being conducive to the self in her Being; that is, there should be a pleasurable feeling of the Good, a feeling of love or joy that joins the self to the Other, that reveals the Other as the Good. Yet such a notion of love is notably absent from Heidegger's analysis both in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* and in *Being and Time*, which, given that both Aristotle and Augustine deploy a notion of the Good that informs and moves the passions, a Good that is desired and even loved, appears as a significant omission. Heidegger in *Basic Concepts of*

---

treating even oneself as a for-the-sake-of which. Assuming that I do treat myself as such, does that mean that I have genuinely confronted my being-toward-death as revealed by anxiety? Have I recognized that my ownmost-potentiality-for-Being is that I must seek but can never be my own basis? If I am a for-the-sake-of-which because I am myself insofar as I am not my own basis, insofar as I am a nothingness, this would still indicate that the supposed authenticity of the for-the-sake-of-which does not belong to or map onto the for-the-sake-of-which. On the second tenuous claim, the fact of death is the given to which I am oriented in being-toward-death; the fact is itself an existential given that is intertwined with the givenness of my being-toward-death. There is only one death. As a whole, Lewis' claims and reading of Heidegger are inextricably tainted by his infelicitous interpretations that altogether miss the mark on Heidegger's being-with, a category that remains at best vague and undetermined in Lewis' account and at worst is based on misreadings of phenomena in their relation to being-with. Lewis never concretely through a phenomenologically description shows how being-with is the place for the ontological difference; to demonstrate that being-with is the place of the ontological difference, one would need to give an account of how being-with other concrete persons is what allows for Dasein to become open to Being in the first place, how, as constituted by the Other in being-with, as thus drawn outside of myself to encounter the Other as other, that is, in her Being or ground, I myself encounter my own Being that then becomes an issue for me. This, however, is lacking in Lewis' interpretation, leaving his claims empty.

Aristotelian Philosophy addresses the chief good without specifying what might constitute this chief good. What is the Good? Correctly, Heidegger recognizes that the good, whatever it is, will be comprised by the conducive to one's Being, as revealed by pleasure. Therein, he has successfully ontologized the good. Yet, this ontologized good, the good of Being, does not indicate where concretely the source of such Being will be located. The end, the limit, the completion of my Being, is not given by Heidegger, even though its identity is given by both Aristotle and Augustine. In this sense, the resources that Heidegger has provided for an ethics, the decisive discovery and establishment of the ontological character of passion that reveals not only Being but also goodness, have at least in Heidegger's own hands fallen far short of an actual formulation of an ethics. Levinas remains correct in his charge that Heidegger himself—even if Heidegger uncovers the most primordial foundations for the ethical—misses the Good.

The Shadow of Kant and the Place of Ethics in Fundamental Ontology

Being and Time develops an analysis of affectivity that has its origins in theories of the passions that appeared in Aristotle and Augustine long before Kant. As such, the dichotomy between nature and freedom, being and goodness, simply does not appear for Aristotle and Augustine. For these two, and Heidegger following them, there is no divide between Being and goodness. As Heidegger states, this relation to the good that is a comporting oneself in the world, a comporting oneself toward Being, is the ethical.[439] The person, as moving toward her completion in the good that is conducive to her Being, is an inherently passionate, loving, motivated entity. Though Heidegger does not

---

[439] BCAP, 48.

explicitly retain in *Being and Time* the notion of the good that he works out in his 1924 reading of Aristotle, a troubling absence that I will discuss momentarily, he still retrieves a notion of affectivity that is intrinsically and explicitly linked to Being, and that given its origins at least contains a latent imprint of the notion of the good that informed such affectivity. As Heidegger himself indicates in 1928 lectures The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic, the "ιδεα του αγαθου" of Plato and Aristotle "which is even beyond beings and the realm of ideas, is the for-the-sake-of-which."[440] By decisively returning to a pre-Kantian notion of the relation between Being and the good, this begs the question of Heidegger's own relationship to Kant, a question that becomes even more pressing given the thesis of this study. For having argued that the work of the two great phenomenological ethicists is permeated by Deep Kantianism, whether Heidegger too falls into this Deep Kantianism alongside Scheler and Levinas is at issue.

Any attempt to overcome Deep Kantianism cannot ignore Kant, cannot simply pretend that Kant did not happen or that he does not matter. There can be no unproblematic return to an idyllic philosophy before Kant that does not confront Kant's pervasive impact. The reality is that the Kantian Copernican Revolution forever changed the landscape of philosophy, at least insofar as western philosophy emerges from a Greek register of logic, reason, and conceptuality. As has been said, after Kant, one may philosophize with or against Kant, but never without Kant. In no way can Heidegger have been said to have ignored Kant, with whom Heidegger frequently and extensively grapples during his long career, a grappling that is perhaps necessary to any post-Kantian philosophy. Complicating matters further, Heidegger's most significant engagement with

---

[440] MFL, 184. Cf. BT, 84.

Kant occurred right around the publication of *Being and Time*, suggesting that *Being and Time* is somehow fundamentally engaged in responding to Kant, and thus perhaps also, following the path of this study, determined by Kant such that Kant's assumptions resonate within the pages of the 1927 treatise. The lecture courses *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (WS 1927-28) and *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy* (SS 1930) both appear within three years of the publication of *Being and Time*, while Heidegger's most decisive engagement with Kant occurs in his 1929 monograph *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*—the Kantbook.

However, as even the titles of most of these engagements with Kant indicate, the majority of what Heidegger writes concerning Kant does not address the ethical dimension of Kant's philosophy, and at least on the surface does not speak to the question of the dichotomy between is and ought, nature and freedom. There is little if anything within *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason on ethics, while even the Kantbook appears to leave the ethical largely untouched.

In contrast, not surprisingly as the result of its topic, *The Essence of Human Freedom* contains a full section investigating freedom as an ethical phenomenon that has potential relevance to Heidegger's relation to Kant in terms of the Deep Kantianism that has been discussed in this study. This investigation of freedom also points back to the Kantbook, which can be seen in a new light that is relevant to Heidegger's interpretation of the ethical in Kant. Heidegger writes in *The Essence of Human Freedom* that for Kant, "[p]ractical freedom as autonomy is self-responsibility, which is the essence of the

personality of the human person, the authentic essence, the humanity of man."[441] The

person is constituted by her autonomy that allows her to act in the world, to initiate her

own sequence of causality that is determined only by the purity of her own willing, her

own practical freedom. This concept of freedom Heidegger immediately ontologizes,

claiming that "[t]he letting-be-encountered of beings, comportment to beings in each and

every mode of manifestness, is only possible where freedom exists. *Freedom is the*

condition of the possibility of the manifestness of the being of beings, of the

understanding of being."[442] Together with a passage from the Kantbook that "[t]he

human being could not be the thrown being as a self if in general it *could* not *let* the being

as such be," these two texts from 1930 and 1929 seek to establish the link between

freedom and letting-be where freedom is in its fullest manifestation constituted by letting-

be that itself requires the freedom to let-be.[443] In letting-be, the person must freely

choose to comport herself to Being, which is to say, to let Being be. The freedom of

choosing to let-be amounts to the freedom to let oneself become subject to Being, to

become the clearing for Being by passively opening oneself to and awaiting the event of

Being. Through this freedom, one binds oneself to Being through letting-be, for to

choose to let Being be, is to bind oneself, to submit oneself to the event of Being.

Freedom, in Heidegger's analysis, is becoming ontologized.

  Heidegger is able to move from Kant's ethical freedom to his own ontological

freedom since the "binding character" of beings in "their so- and that-being, is only

possible where the comportment to beings…already acknowledges this binding character.

---

[441] *Essence of Human Freedom*, 202-203.
[442] Ibid., 207.
[443] *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 160.

But the latter amounts to an originary self-binding, or, in Kantian terms, the giving of a law unto oneself."[444] In order for Being to be encountered at all, in order for the person to be open to Being, she must be free to let beings and Being be, free to recognize the binding character of these beings that escapes her. She must not impose herself on Being or otherwise restrict Being, but must choose to freely open herself, to orient herself toward Being. By saying that freedom is the condition for the openness to Being, Heidegger is not at all maintaining that Being as such depends upon freedom, but rather that for any being to actually encounter beings in their Being, such a being must be free, where freedom signifies a letting-be that as letting-be is fundamentally passive. This relation is clarified by Heidegger when in 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* he states that "the relation to Being is letting. That all willing should be grounded in letting strikes the understanding as strange….But to know means to be able to stand in the truth. Truth is the openness of beings."[445] The primordial encounter with Being must inherently be that of letting, of passivity, since the self only is on the condition that it have somehow received Being into itself, that it have come into the clearing of Being. That one can will at all requires the condition that one exists in the first place, that one have let Being be and enter into the self. As existing as the clearing of Being, the self is subordinate to, the passive recipient of Being. Dasein is not active in its freedom when the latter has been ontologized; at its core, this freedom signifies the receptivity of making oneself open to, a clearing for, Being. To freely will demands that the self let itself be exposed to Being; to will, I must not close myself off, but let myself be the servant of Being in which I am bound to Being.

---

[444] *Essence of Human Freedom*, 207..
[445] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 24.

In other words, the person engages in self-binding when originally from her beginning she must bind herself to Being. Through acknowledging that she is the being for whom her Being is an issue, from before her capacity for choosing or understanding Being, she binds herself to Being. In this ontological interpretation conducted by Heidegger, what Kant gets right in his ethics regarding freedom is the binding character of the ethical. Kant correctly emphasizes the necessity of ethical imperatives, that I as myself am bound to the demands of normativity. In discussing the necessity and universality of moral law, one can draw out from Kant the insight that the ethical binds the self insofar as it is itself to live in a certain way. Simply through being myself, I am in the ethical called to fulfill my duty irrespective of my own changeable will. Ethics binds me to comport myself to Being and to beings so that I conform to the necessity of the ethical in which my identity is constituted by my subjection to the good. Duty, what the Greeks called δεον, is also what is proper, binding, needful, requisite. An ethics of duty emphasizes the significance of discovering what is proper and needful in the affairs of life; whatever answer one might give to the identity of the needful and proper, the self will find itself bound to a specific comportment. As an ethical being, the person encounters the given of simply being bound. She must act and dwell according to some standard, the standard that is needful for her. On account that she is the being who she is, the person finds there to be, even if not always clear, a proper and needful way of dwelling in the world—a binding that is the necessity of ethics and of choosing to live subject to a guiding standard.

That is, by ontologizing Kant's notion of practical freedom, Heidegger has radically broken from any sort of Deep Kantianism that would separate freedom and

nature, ought and is. Whereas Kant's freedom is in opposition to Being and the domain of nature by acting autonomously against the inclinations, passions, and things of the world, Heidegger's ontological freedom is precisely characterized by the comportment to Being. The person is bound to Being. To be free for Heidegger is to be free for Being, free for letting Being be, opening oneself to Being. I am free to bind myself to the binding of Being to which I as existing am subjected. I did not choose my existence, yet I have been thrown into and thereby bound to Being, demanding that I let myself be open to Being. From Heidegger's perspective, the ought is an ought that says that one ought to let Being be, to let Being manifest itself, in contrast to Kant's ought that is a pure willing of one's own self-legislating autonomy devoid of any receptivity. Heidegger's ontological freedom is directed toward the heteronomy of freedom, the subjection of the person to Being, a subjection to which she must bind herself insofar as she is a person. If anything, Heidegger's engagement with Kantian freedom challenges Deep Kantianism even further, reinforcing the claim that Heidegger successfully retrieves a pre-Kantian ηθος that comes to inform his interpretation of Kant. As pre-Kantian, this ηθος begins with an ontologically indicative affectivity that reveals the things, others, and events of the world as pleasurable or painful, as conducive to or detrimental toward the self's Being; the passionate response to the world reveals what is good and bad, reveals the ethical. Passion seems to reveal both goodness and Being.

The argument of this chapter as a whole regarding Heideggerian affectivity and ethics leads to two questions. First, what is the good of *Being and Time*? Since Heidegger adopts in the existential analytic both Augustine's view of care as seeking delight in the good and Aristotle's understanding of concern as limited by the good, there

should be a corresponding notion of the good in the 1927 treatise. Though this notion of goodness is never explicitly addressed, that it is fundamental to Augustine and Aristotle indicates that its apparent absence from *Being and Time* leaves a significant systematic gap. As Dahlstrom observes, "despite the lack of any explicit talk of Dasein's good in Heidegger's existential analysis in *Being and Time*, he is clearly appropriating into the analysis Augustinian themes that, on Heidegger's own reading, suppose a conception of the good."[446] By adopting a notion of affectivity that is directed toward the revelation of the good as that which is conducive to the Being of the self, Heidegger has brought into his fundamental ontology a structure of affectivity that should inform the person how she should live and also should motivate her to seek some specific way of living that stands as the chief good. Yet, in ontologizing the good, Heidegger has not fully thought through the specific tendencies and characteristics that constitute the good, leaving the ethical fundamentally unthought for Heidegger, even in his thinking that approaches but never fully takes up the ethical. Or, when such thinking begins to take up the ethical, the ethical question of how I should live my life, of how the ontological might motivate and inform my choices, once again is abandoned by Heidegger. What, then, motivates and guides Dasein, what directs Dasein in its life, if not the Good? Does the for-the-sake-of-which that admittedly characterizes Dasein in Being and Time make sense in the absence of an investigation into the Good? What constitutes the Good that informs and motivates Dasein in its concernful dealings with the world?

Second, because Dasein is fundamentally related and open to others through affectivity, there should be a corresponding affect that relates Dasein to the Other. What

---

[446] Dahlstrom 2009, 264.

is the affect that relates Dasein to the Other? Once again, Dahlstrom has noted this

omission in Being and Time; "[r]eference to any affective component is conspicuously—

indeed, here I would say egregiously—absent, as he exclusively invokes understanding to

account for being-with."[447] Though I have proposed in this chapter that the relation to the

other insofar as the self is a speaking being is described for the most part in terms of

affectivity in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Dahlstrom has quite rightly

discerned that this affective character of being-with vanishes in *Being and Time*. This is

an unusual silence in *Being and Time*, on account of the fact that the finding-oneself of

Befindlichkeit as mooded would imply that one finds oneself with the Other at all through

a particular passion such as joy, pleasure, or love. If Dasein is being-there through

affectivity and affectivity is always already bound with the ontological states of the world

and the Other, then it seems that Dasein itself would be constituted by an affect of and for

the Other. Where, then, is this affect in *Being and Time*, or even elsewhere in

Heidegger's extensive *corpus*? After all, if as Heidegger states in *The Fundamental*

Concepts of Metaphysics that attunement, *Stimmung*, is the way in which the person is

with others, then there should be a passion that reveals and binds the Other to the self.

Since being-with as speaking being is constitutive of Dasein in its Being, then Dasein

only is being-there through being-with, through the Other; does this not suggest that only

through a fuller analysis of being-with can Heidegger conduct an analysis of Dasein as

the clearing of Being? For if Dasein is only the clearing of Being on the basis of being-

with the Other, then would not the Other be precisely how being-there is possible at all?

Would openness to Being not be possible solely on the condition that the self be opened

---

[447] Dahlstrom 2019, 115, cf. 118.

to the Other through tending outside of itself in the passionate revelation of the Other? Would this passion or its object not also be the limit and completion of Dasein as what opens Dasein to itself and to Being on the basis of the Other as the ground of Dasein? If I am not my own ground, then my Being is from the Other, disclosing that I only arrive at Being through the Other, a relation that itself occurs through passion, a passion from and for and of the Other. Would, then, Heidegger not have arrived too quickly at Being without going through the heart of the Other?

Chapter Seven
The Nothing and the Beloved: The Primordial Passionate Unity of the Good and Being

The last chapter concluded with two questions that illuminate the omissions that plague Martin Heidegger's ontological philosophy. Heidegger certainly does not provide an explicit ethics, and though he comes at times quite close to providing the sources for a possible ethical ontology, he ultimately chooses not to do so. He points toward the possibility of Being-for-the-Other in his analyses of affectivity and Being-with, but at the point of *Being and Time* has abandoned any pretense of discussions of the good or of the heart in terms of a loving relation to others. Similarly, in the previous chapters of this dissertation, Max Scheler and Emmanuel Levinas, despite separately contributing the insights of feeling as disclosive of the ethical and ethics is oriented toward the Other, respectively, both remain haunted by the shadow of Deep Kantianism, assuming with Immanuel Kant as their point of departure the dichotomy of nature and freedom, being and goodness. The status of phenomenological ethics still hangs in the balance.

Recapitulation

Before attempting to make a definitive claim regarding the status of phenomenological ethics, a moment should be taken to recapitulate the great discoveries, both explicit and implicit, that stand as the contributions of Scheler and Levinas to the task of founding a phenomenological ethics.

First, in Scheler, "any sort of rightness or falseness and perversity in my life and activity are determined by whether there is an objectively correct order of these stirrings of my love and hate," by my "heart," which "deserves to be called the core of man as a

spiritual being much more than knowing and willing do."[448] The ethical is disclosed by

the order of the heart, so that feeling and passion reveal what is good and evil. The

source of normativity is indicated by the heart, meaning that to establish an ethics, one

must proceed through the affective sphere of the person, rather than rational sphere.

Ethics is experienced and known in feeling.

Second, again from Scheler, "love was thus always the primal act by which a

being, without ceasing to be this one delimited being, abandons itself, in order to share

and participate in another being as an *ens intentionale*."[449] The primordial passion of the

self is its love, which moves the self outside of itself stretching toward the Other. Love is

the primary affection since it is what constitutes the self, for the self exists insofar as it

moves in exteriorization toward the Other.

Third, in Levinas, "preexisting the plane of ontology is the ethical plane," where

the ethical is constituted by the "strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my

thoughts and my possessions…a calling into question of my spontaneity."[450] Insofar as

ethics is the relation to the concrete Other person, the first relation is the ethical relation.

For the self is first constituted by the relation to, the encounter with, the Other. The self

is constituted as being-for-the-Other.

Fourth, albeit only implicitly in Levinas as I have interpreted him, is that the

Other that "expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with

its destitution and nudity—its hunger—without my being able to be deaf to that

appeal."[451] The Other, as originarily destitute, is constituted by a nothingness in which

---

[448] *Ordo Amoris*, 99, 100.
[449] Ibid., 110.
[450] *Totality and Infinity*, 201, 43..
[451] Ibid., 200.

she is not self-sufficient, in which she demands that I respond to her call and her cries. Similarly, the self "is a passivity more passive still than any passivity."[452] The self as wholly passive is in itself a nothingness, for in its passivity it must receive what and who is not itself, it must receive the Other without any choice in whether it receives this Other. It does not begin with itself or its active power, but with its nothingness that demands that it passively receive the Other. The ethical relation between self and Other is thereby permeated by nothingness.

And then, though from one who does not make any explicit contribution to the tradition of phenomenological ethics, but who through his retrieval of a pre-Kantian pathos brings to the fore a pre-Kantian ethos, is the fifth and final crucial discovery from Heidegger, which is as follows.

Fifth, "*mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself toward something.*"[453] Affectivity reveals the self in its relation to the world, indicating ontological situations that disclose how the self is with respect to the entities that it encounters. The self feels ontological changes, in particular in the affections of pleasure and pain, showing that "*the world is there for the most part in the mode of the beneficial and the harmful, of that which uplifts or upsets being-there.*"[454] Passions reveal how ontological situations are good or bad for the self in its Being.

Putting these insights into short sentences admittedly risks making them formulaic, but perhaps placing the fundamental discoveries of phenomenological ethics

---

[452] *Otherwise than Being*, 72.
[453] *Being and Time*, 136.
[454] *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 34.

to date will help clarify the discussion around and at the same time promote the

phenomenological approach to ethics itself.

> Ethics can only be revealed through the heartfelt domain of passion.
> Love is the fundamental passion.
> Ethics is constituted by the Other.
> The relation to the Other is the first, primordial relation of the self.
> The Other is in herself a nothingness.
> The self is in himself a nothingness.
> Passion is indicative of ontological situations.
> Passion reveals what is good and bad for the Being of the self.
> Passion constitutes the self.

The question is now how these discoveries might be developed into a coherent whole that

establishes an ethics that clearly provides the sources of normativity, how such

normativity is disclosed to the self, and the foundation for the sources of normativity; this

is the task of this final chapter. At points I will cite texts that have previously appeared

and texts that have yet to appear in this study, though these will be in the minority, and

primarily for the purpose of inspiration. For in the spirit of the phenomenological

method itself, the time has now come, following the great insights thus far of this

tradition, to conduct a phenomenology of the ethical from the basis of daily lived

experience itself.

Stirrings of a Restless Heart

The first question of the possibility of a phenomenological ethics is where to

begin, or in other words, which experience, of all those of daily life, should be privileged

as the originary experience from which an ethics can be established. Since this ethics is

grounded in lived experience itself, it is thus also grounded in the ontological structure of

the existence of such experience, meaning that this ethical inquiry is also an ontological

inquiry, an inquiry into the character of existence itself. As beginning with experience, this inquiry is fundamentally an existential inquiry that has its origins in the givenness of existence—"I exist, I am." This is not in a Cartesian sense of having logically demonstrated my existence beyond radical doubt, but a phenomenological and also Augustinian statement of finding myself existing, derived simply from experience itself.

In the most basic analysis of the "I am," the self finds itself having been; by the time that the self has found itself existing, it recognizes that it has already existed before it came to itself. The self is late to itself, having had an immemorial past that it does not remember but constitutes itself, makes it who it is before the self has consciousness of itself. In the self finding itself here now, it finds itself having always already moved from its immemorial past to its current time. Augustine points to this finding-oneself when he writes that "I do not know whence I came into what I may call a mortal life or a living death. Whence I know not."[455] The self has moved from past to present in a motion that began before it could have known its beginning, a past that the self is always too late to have experienced. Yet from this past, the self is in the present.[456] In having moved to the now present, at every moment of the present, it has moved into the future from the present, so that the future becomes the present. The self has always already moved, is always already moving. The self finds itself in movement. In moving from past through the present into the future, the self has moved through not only time but also through the

---

[455] *Confessions*, 1.6.7.
[456] This points to the significance of memory, suggesting a detour that investigates memory in terms of ethics. This is perhaps why Augustine, in what arguably remains the greatest study of memory in *Confessions* 10, devotes the second half of the book to ethics, specifically the question of fallen care in lust, curiosity, and pride.

things, others, and events within time. It moves through life, it is always moving through life and the events that comprise life.

The self is moving, the self is not at rest. Famously observed by Augustine at the opening of *Confessions*, "our heart is restless."[457] In its movement, the self is restless. The first given of existence is restlessness. This restlessness, seen in the movement through time among the situations of life, is felt in the heart. That is, it is a passion, something received in feeling by the self. For in finding itself moving through time, the self does not act; it does not bring itself through time, choose its time, or choose the events, things, and persons it encounters in time. It finds itself suffering these events, finds itself moving, without regard for its free choice. The self is passive in moving through time and the affairs of time. To find oneself moving is to feel oneself moving, to receive oneself as moving. The I can only encounter the movement of life in its receptivity, a receptivity that is the heart. The heart is receptivity itself, feeling itself, feeling the movement of the restlessness of life.

In the self finding itself moving through time, it moves neither through an empty progression nor through an idle sequence of objects that pass by without affecting the self. Rather, in the movement through time, the self feels itself restless in encountering singular concrete events that comprise the time of life. Finding oneself moving through time is finding oneself enduring the *situations* of time. Concretely, time is experienced by bringing before the self the alterations that it must suffer during the course of its existence. The passion of restlessness extends to these singular events, through which the

---

[457] *Conf.*, 1.1.1.

self moves in its moving through time. The restless heart is a restlessness with regard to the things of life.

Among these things and events of time, the self feels its restlessness become concretized as directed toward the affairs of life. The feeling of restlessness becomes manifest in the most basic phenomena, ranging from hunger and thirst to boredom and solitude. In hunger, the self seeks to find food in response to its rumbling stomach; in thirst, the self searches for water to quench its parched throat. The self is restless in its hunger and thirst, a moving after something that might relieve these painful feelings. In searching for whatever food and drink that might end the pain, the self is restless. More frustratingly for the self, no matter how much it successfully satisfies these desires of hunger and thirst, they promptly return, demanding once more that they be fulfilled. Any satisfaction is only momentary, a fleeting pleasure that is nearly immediately pulled away by the ceaseless passing of time. Time pulls me into the future, demanding without end that I eat and drink, that I always must search for food and water. I am restless in having to always already orient my life to procuring these things.

In solitude and boredom, the self feels itself pulled toward others or toward some way to pass the time, respectively. In particular in solitude, the self feels itself desiring and seeking the presence of other persons, to speak to them and to be with them, to live life together. When it feels alone, the self is thereby moved to find others with whom it might spend its time. In its movement toward others, the self is restless, unable to be with itself, desperately attempting to be with some Other who might respond to the cries of the lonely self. In solitude, the self feels as if it has no one to speak to, no event that demarcates the passing of time. There is, when alone, no one to respond to the self, who

gives place to the self so that the self might share its life with that of an Other. All comes to be an idle monotony, where the self feels oppressed by sameness and recurrence of identity. Only the appearance of an Other can alleviate the self that suffers from being alone, a self that is thus restless in its search for the coming of such an Other. Yet, even if the self finds an Other, so often time pulls this Other away, leaving the self once again alone. The events of time, whether as mundane as the growing apart of friendship or as traumatic as the death of a friend, bring the self back to its solitude. The restless self is necessarily moving toward others, made to suffer the coming and going of others without any of its own power to prevent this coming or going, condemned to suffer being alone again or at the very least condemned to fearing that it might soon find itself isolated.

To the self that feels boredom, nothing appears that might occupy its time. In its thinking and activity, the self fails to encounter any object that stands out to it, that might call upon the self to give attention to such an object. All objects fade away so that the self is oppressed by boredom, finding nothing for it to do or think about. It finds itself trapped in itself, in its own thinking and power to act, with no way of exercising this thinking or acting. Most notably in boredom, the thinking in general of the self, its whole consciousness, becomes empty. The self feels boredom precisely when it wants to think about something but finds nothing about which to think. Its conscious life is permeated by the absence of anything with which it could spend its time. This is not at all a question of knowledge, of the powers of the self to grasp something or a question of the conditions for the possibility of cognition; instead, this is a question of the self finding any entity or event that might appear attractive to the self. That is, the self in its boredom is empty of possible contents, which becomes manifest in the self finding its life wholly

empty. Nothing appears meaningful to the self in its boredom, a self that consequently is always on the move for what might give itself content. For without content, without something about which to think, the self could not think at all. Its thinking in boredom threatens to become a void that imprisons the self. In its boredom, the self is restless, searching for what might appear as meaningful and desirable.

Overall, restlessness characterizes the constant motion of the self in which the self is always striving, always moving, always desiring. In finding itself always already having been moving through time, the self finds itself having always been impassioned with restlessness in its various manifestations as hunger, thirst, isolation, and boredom by the events of time, where the self feels itself unsatisfied. The self moves in hunger, thirst, isolation, and boredom, and thus moves through time, since it does not have all that it needs. By itself, the self cannot satisfy itself. As we are about to see, the key word here is the *not* itself.

The Revelation of Nihilism

In restlessness, the self feels itself to not have all that it needs to live. In being restless, the self feels its own insufficiency. The self is always moving after something, always seeking something with which to satisfy itself. Were the self at rest, were the self from the beginning already satisfied, there would be no motion of life through time. An entirely satisfied self, an entirely satisfied being, would never move, would never be restless for it would have all that it needed to exist. A being at rest would not even experience time, for the movement of time, of being pulled along by time, would be utterly foreign to it, since in having all that it needs to exist, any sort of movement would

be only a decline from its original perfection. A perfect, self-satisfied, rested being would remain wholly in itself, content in the satisfactions that it provided to itself from its own power.

But, from the beginning, this is not the being that the self finds itself to be. The self finds itself to be in a position that is wholly contrary to that of a satisfied being. In its restlessness, the self is always moving through the time of life as comprised by the events of life. The various manifestations of restlessness all reveal the insufficiency and lack of the self. This lack consists in that the self does not have all that it needs to exist. In hunger, the self does not have the food that satisfies hunger, food without which the self will die. In thirst, the self does not have the water that quenches thirst, water without which, once more, the self will die. In isolation, the self does have the friendship that nourishes its heart, without which, it could perhaps die of heartbreak—or suicide. In boredom, the self is threatened by having no content for thinking, demanding that the self confront the possibility of the cessation of its thinking, that its thinking cannot supply itself with content about which to think. The restlessness of these feelings reveals that the self must move outside of itself if it is to find what it needs to remain itself, to remain in existence. Without food or meaningful content, the self is thrown before a nothingness. The self is brought before its complete lack of any inherent ability to sustain itself in Being. Restlessness, by revealing that the self does not have what it must have to be, discloses the nothingness of the self.

The self is constituted by the nothing. The self is not, it is not itself. In its existence as the being that it is, it is constituted by a not. The self responds to its hunger by seeking the food that it does not have and cannot from itself alone provide, responds

to its thirst by seeking the water that does not belong to it, responds to its solitude by searching for others that are not itself, and responds to its boredom by seeking to find content that is not its own for its thinking that moves it to think. In all of these, the not is what is most prominent. The actions and tasks in which it spends the time of its life are a response from the beginning to what it is not, to its originary nothingness. All that the self does in some way results from its originary nothingness. The nothingness of the self is revealed by its restlessness, mandating that the self seek to overcome this restlessness, to seek rest. The nothingness of the self is the *not* that constitutes, the constitutive nothing.

By nothingness, what is signified here is not at all a logical nothingness that would be an empty negation defined by the negation of some positive statement, a mere ~A, devoid of content. Rather, nothingness is the lack of ground, the ungrounded character of the self in which the self does not have its own ground that would keep it in Being. The self finds itself lacking ground in the very fact that it is, in its "I am," for there, in finding itself having already existed before it knew it existed, it had a basis before it could have possibly been its own basis. Heidegger gives an account of this nothingness in *Being and Time*, where he states that though the self "has *not* laid that basis *itself*, it reposes in the weight of it, which is made manifest to it as a burden by Dasein's mood."[458] The self encounters the fact that it has not established its own basis in the feeling, the mood, of restlessness. Restlessness is more than a momentary feeling, but stands as the fundamental mood of the self insofar as the self in general feels itself to be restless as a whole. The self is always and everywhere restless. The burden of having

---

[458] *Being and Time*, 284.

not established oneself, of not having grounded oneself, appears in this mood of restlessness.

In its constitution as a being that has not established its own basis or ground, the self "[i]n being a basis—that is, in existing as thrown—Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. It is never existent *before* its basis, but only *from it* and *as this basis*. Thus 'Being-a-basis' means *never* to have power over one's ownmost Being from the ground up."[459] The self finding itself having already existed is its thrownness, its having been thrown involuntarily before it even was at all into being. Its possibilities of its later conscious life only emerge after it has welled up out of its basis. As originating in this basis, the self is this basis itself, but as late and as inhering within this basis, it does not have power over its Being. From the beginning, its Being is not its own. The key word that Heidegger uses in this passage is 'never;' never does the self have its basis in itself. Heidegger continues, emphasizing the *not* itself even more: "[t]his '*not*' belongs to the existential meaning of 'thrownness.' It itself, being a basis, *is* a nullity of itself….what one has in view here is rather a 'not' which is constitutive for this *Being* of Dasein—its thrownness."[460] The self as ground is in itself a nothingness, for the self is not its own ground. The Being that the self has is itself constituted by nothingness, for the self is at all in not being its ground, in not being self-sufficient. In having been thrown into existence, the self always is *not*, the result of its emerging from a ground that can never belong to it. In having been thrown, the self was born, given its existence from a source that is not itself. To be born is to not be one's own ground. As Francois Raffoul

---

459 Ibid.
460 Ibid.

observes, "[t]he 'nullity' lies in the fact of not being the basis of one's own being, of being thrown into existence."[461] The self originates in the nothingness of its birth.

But the restlessness of hunger, thirst, isolation, and boredom is bounded not only by the horizon of birth, but also by the horizon of death. The self has an immemorial past, finding itself already having been before it can say that "I am," thrown into its existence that it did not choose. The conditions of life that enable life to continue are imposed upon the self without its freedom. In being condemned to hunger, thirst, isolation, and boredom, to which the self must respond if it is to live, the self seeks to avoid death by what is beyond itself instead of by its own powers. The self is thrown into being hungry and bored so that it might avoid death. In the passages on the nothingness of thrownness, Heidegger points to the nothingness of death; "[n]ot only is the projection, as one that has been thrown, determined by the nullity of Being-a-basis; as *projection* it is itself essentially *null*."[462] In being oriented toward attempting to find its ground, the self is always haunted by the inevitability of its coming death. For just as it emerges from a nothing, its projections into the future, its possibilities, threaten to come to nothing, in that these possibilities all lead to death. The self, in not having what it needs to exist, in finding itself always already removed from its ground, searches for ground, for how it might continue to exist. Yet the self in emerging from the nothing cannot provide for itself its ground, condemning it to return in death to the nothingness from which it came. This possibility of death "is the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there," so that "[d]eath is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein."[463] Death as such

---

[461] Raffoul 2010, 263.
[462] BT, 285.
[463] Ibid., 250

looms as the annihilation of the self, so that it can no longer exist in any meaningful way. Whatever religions might have to say about death or whatever possibility that there is some unknown continuation beyond death, is phenomenologically subordinated to the manifest nothingness of death. The self is removed from the world in which it dwells, removed from the world that gives to it its Being. Though its basis remains forever behind it, the self comes to exist through birth in this world, an existence that death strips away.

The self is thus a double nihility, stretched between the nothingness of birth and the nothingness of death, thus itself a nothing. As noticed by Simon Critchley, "Dasein is a being suspended between two nothings, two nullities: the nullity of thrownness and the nullity of projection," "a double nothing, a double zero."[464] The self finds itself as thrown into existence to be trapped in this existence that is itself nothing, an existence that is not its own and that must end without its choice. I find myself suspended between two inescapable nothingnesses that subject me to their abyssal depths, that always threaten to swallow me up. I am thrown into existing in birth, utterly divorced already from my ground, and then must face death, which pulls me forever into the abyss. My current Being is predicated wholly upon arising from nothing and hurtling toward nothing; all that I am, is an attempt to reach ground, to go elsewhere than the nothing, but seems doomed from the beginning to fail in the annihilation of death. I seek food and drink that I might be sustained in Being, and avoid boredom and solitude so that I might have content and others for the sustenance of my thinking that similarly sustains me in Being.

---

[464] Critchley 2011, 151, 153.

This all indicates that the "I am," the originary fact of existence, is an "I am not," an "I-nothing." The fact of existence emerges from the given of non-existence, from the givenness of the nothing that grants that the self might come to say "I am" at all. But the self can only say the "I am" on the basis of its primordial "I am not." The first given is the given of nothingness, not the given of Being. Restlessness reveals the nihilism of the self, its suspension between two nothings that indicate that the self is nothing in itself. The self, as tending toward the nothing in its restlessness, is tending toward nihilism. Nihilism here refers to the directionality of the self toward the nothing, its endless struggle to remain in existence that is haunted by death, by the inevitability of the annihilation of the self. Yet, in beginning from the nothing, the self is seeking Being. The self seeks to have Being, to escape the abyss of the nothing, to somehow attain ground. The feeling of restlessness is accompanied by the origin of the movement for ground.

The Exteriorization of Love

In restlessness, the self feels its primordial, constitutive nothingness. In response to this feeling of nothingness, of its own lack of ground, the self moves outside of itself in an attempt to find its ground. The self tends outside of itself, a motion concerning which Scheler writes "love was thus always the primal act by which a being, without ceasing to be this one delimited being, abandons itself, in order to share and participate in another being as an *ens intentionale*."[465] Similarly, Jean-Luc Marion has noticed that "only love opens up knowledge of the other as such. By which, at an inevitable distance, it recovers

---

[465] *Ordo Amoris*, 110.

the function of charity."[466] Love is the motion of exteriorization, in which the self moves

outside of itself toward an other in searching for ground. In love, the self becomes

exterior by directing itself to the other. For in love, one being, that is constituted by

nothingness, leaves itself behind so that it might encounter another being intentionally,

that is, as other. For only what is other can be a genuinely intentional object as such,

since intentionality is a tending, stretching out toward. To tend is to tend toward

something, which, on account of the self in itself beginning as a nothingness, indicates

that the self is tending toward something that is not itself, something that is wholly other

than the self. This motion away from the self, its exteriorization, is love itself, a love that

in its ontological character is directed toward an alterity that might be the ground of the

self. In the words of Augustine, "love is a kind of motion, and since there is no motion

except it be toward something, when we seek what ought to be loved we are looking for

something to which this motion ought to direct us."[467] Love is inherently a motion,

insofar as love is felt as a passion that comes upon the self. The self does not choose to

love, but finds itself loving, moving outward away from itself toward the other. For as

motion, love must be seeking an object; motion cannot exist unless it is oriented toward

an object. In *On the Trinity*, Augustine writes that "there is no love where nothing is

being loved."[468] Love, like all passions, takes an intentional object, without which it

simply does not exist. There is only love when there is some *thing* or *person* to love, an

object of love. As originarily nothing in itself, the self cannot from its beginning love

---

[466] Marion 2002, 160.
[467] *83 Different Questions*, 35.1.
[468] *On the Trinity*, 9.2.2

itself alone, as it in itself does not exist. It can only love when it goes outside of itself in love, the primordial motion that allows the self to be at all.

This is not a contradiction with what I claimed previously in this chapter about the originary character of restlessness, since the dual passions of restlessness and love are equiprimordial. Both are felt together in the self, which emerges from the nothing, thus feeling restlessness, but in emerging from the nothing, does so at all because it loves, because it has moved outside of itself so that it might tend toward the ground that grants it its Being. Love is the primordial feeling directed toward the Other, while restlessness is the primordial feeling directed toward the nothing. When there is the one feeling, there will also be the other feeling.

Love as passionate exteriorization toward the other leads to the birth of the passionate life of the heart in daily experience. That is, what satisfies the directionality of love is conducive to the Being of the self, is felt as pleasure, while what obstructs the directionality of love is detrimental to the Being of the self, is felt as pain. This is evidenced by Augustine when he remarks that "Bodily pain in any animate creature is itself a great and wonderful power of the soul…the pain it [the soul] feels means, if I may so put it, that it is not indifferent to the organism being spoiled or broken up, but reacts to this with indignation."[469] Pain is experienced when the self feels something that harms or threatens its Being, that would destroy its access to or its own groundedness in existence. Love, in seeking the Being of the self, results in pain when this Being that is loved by the self is confronted with the possibility of partial or complete annihilation, since even a partial annihilation threatens the possibility of continuance in Being. This analysis of

---

[469] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 3.16.25.

pain extends also to pleasure, in that similarly, pleasure is the consequence of love when the Being that is loved by the self is uplifted and ensured. Because the self loves and seeks Being, it feels pleasure in what satisfies this love by being conducive to Being, Being here taken in the sense of what might ground the self, the self's access to that which allows it to exist in the world.

Pleasure and pain, felt in the flesh, are also felt even more strongly in the heart, in the four basic Augustinian passions of desire, joy, sorrow, and fear that result from love. According to Augustine, "there are four passions of the mind [*perturbationes animi*]…desire, joy, sadness, and fear."[470] Pleasure becomes heartfelt desire when the self seeks after Being or whatever is conducive to its Being, ranging from the desire for food to the desire to be with others, and becomes heartfelt joy when Being or what is conducive to Being is actually concretely encountered by the self, the joy of eating and the joy of dear friendship. Pain is felt in the heart as sorrow when its Being or what furthers its Being is destroyed, and as fear when the self is threatened by the annihilation of Being or what supports Being. In all of these fundamental passions, an ontological situation is encountered, where the self is confronted with what supports or undermines its Being. The self loves Being in a motion outside of itself toward Being, toward what might give to it its ground. The passions of joy, desire, sorrow, and fear reveal to the self whether some event, thing, or other in the world is conducive or harmful to its attaining its ground.

That is, insofar as the self loves Being, it experiences Being and what supports Being as the good. The self encounters Being as the Good itself. Immediately, from its

---

[470] *Confessions* 10.14.22.

first confrontation with Being, the self feels in its passions this Being to be the Good. For passion, as revealing what is conducive or detrimental to Being, reveals what is good or bad for the Being of the self. The self inherently experiences the things and events of the world as goods with respect to Being, with respect to the Good. For the Good is what is desired and loved by the self; but what is desired and loved by the self is Being; therefore, the Good consists in Being. In any case, this Good cannot be understood as an arbitrary conceptual definition that would claim without basis that the Good is some abstract entity mechanically sought by the self. Rather, the Good is Being itself; insofar as the self inherently seeks Being or what is conducive to its Being, the self encounters Being as the Good, as the desirable. In moving toward Being, the self is moving toward the Good and things that are good. From the beginning of its existence, the self, to be itself at all so that it might later choose among its possibilities, including identifying its own good for itself, must already have tended outside of itself toward Being, toward ground, so that it might have Being. Thus, the Good has already been chosen for the self on the basis of the self from its origins tending toward Being.

Precisely because the self aims at the Good that is Being does the self have any ability at all to freely choose what it supposes to be its own good for itself. Though the self might even go so far as to actively choose what is opposed to its conditions of existence, though the self might choose suicide, the self can only choose suicide as opposed to Being, opposed to the originary Good for the self. The self has chosen the good of suicide, the escape from the burden and trauma or seeming meaninglessness and purposelessness of existence, but this choice of attempting to end the pain or futility is itself a recognition that Being itself is Good. In the desire for suicide, in the case of

meaninglessness, the self flees from this world because the things of the world do not support it, do not appear to grant it Being; in the case of the sheer burden of existence, the self flees from Being since the self alone finds itself not able to endure Being. But it cannot endure Being as the result of the self not existing by itself. The self, as nothing in itself, when isolated quickly becomes burdened by Being as the result of its native nihility that prevents it from keeping itself in existence. In other words, as Being is the Good, the self finds itself unable by itself to attain the Good. Utterly alone and weak, the self falls back into itself, surrendering itself to its nothingness and admitting that it cannot by itself reach the Good. Suicide and despair assume the originary possibility of the Good and Being.

The ground or Being that allows the self to exist at all is other than the self, since the self, as nothing in itself, does not make itself exist, keep itself in existence, or have any power to prevent the complete annihilation of its existence. The self, as nothing in itself, is therefore brought into existence from nothingness by its ground, by Being, that is itself not the self. The self, in love, is tending in a motion of exteriorization toward what or perhaps who is not the self; that is, the self is moving toward alterity. Its ground is alterity. Whatever the character of Being and the Good is, it will consist in alterity, in radical difference and otherness from the self. The self *is* through tending toward the other.

The Advent of Alterity

Thus far, I have not clarified the character of the other under discussion; I have claimed that love is the motion of exteriorization, but I have not specified what or who

precisely this exteriorization seeks. Is any entity whatsoever that appears on first glance

to be other than the self, actually the Other? Is the Other simply any ordinary intentional

object? I have claimed that in intentionality, the self always is moving outside of itself in

a motion that tends toward the Other. But, would this not mean that alterity consists

merely in any material thing in the world, a materiality that alone is enough to ground the

self and grant it an appropriate object for its love?

The character of this alterity is suggested by Gabriel Marcel in a passage from

Creative Fidelity, where he asks "how can I put my trust in a thing—which is inert by

definition, i.e., incapable of responding?"[471] Marcel here is establishing an important

basic clarification for what constitutes alterity by recognizing the difference between

proper alterity and material things. A material thing in the world, whether a constructed

artifact or a naturally occurring material being, is as inert entirely closed off in itself. A

thing is a being-in-itself, in no way open to what is not itself. Though a thing exists as

the effect of other things, it in no way is open to these things, to its ground in these

things. It remains in-itself. To be in-itself is for an entity to not tend outside of itself, for

the entity to not move beyond itself. Not only does the in-itself have no tendency toward

alterity, it has no tendency at all. For the in-itself, as dependent upon the causality of a

prior in-itself, does not exist by itself, and thus has no movement that is the result of its

own power. Whatever movement it has is borrowed from the in-itself from which this

particular in-itself emerged, without which it would not be able to move. The in-itself is

thus, as Marcel states, wholly inert. As having no innate movement at all, the in-itself

can never tend beyond itself toward what is other, it can never tend back toward the

---

[471] *Creative Fidelity*, 136.

ground from which it came. The in-itself, once it is in any capacity, is divorced from ground. The in-itself consequently cannot respond; the in-itself does not love anything else, since it has no love, no movement toward its ground or alterity, in the first place. As lacking the directionality of love, the in-itself cannot even care, for care is attention for, tending-toward, something. The in-itself does not care about anything at all, meaning that irrespective of a self caring for an in-itself, the in-itself will never respond to this care. One might care for a stone, pond, or car, attempting to ensure their preservation, but the stone, to take just one of these examples, will never react in any way to the care. Though the stone might be sheltered from the eroding effects of wind and rain, the stone will in no way reply back to the one who cared for it. The stone does not orient itself to care, to an alterity that grounds and perhaps protects the stone in its Being.

As closed off in itself, the thing is sameness, of the order of identity. It is in no way different than itself. This is the result of its inability to move, to tend toward an other than itself. The thing, in being in-itself, is divorced from its ground, causing it to be an isolated entity that is comprised by only itself. But as only itself, dependent upon the other that is its ground in the other in-itself that brought it into Being, the in-itself falls once more into the nothing. The in-itself has always already fallen into the nothing in its motionless identity traps it within itself. In its nihilistic collapse, the thing proves unable to be the ground for the love of the self. Love, as a motion of exteriorization, moves toward the Other, an alterity that must remain always Other if it is to not fall back into itself. The self in its search for ground as constituted by the exteriorization of love is directed toward an alterity that would as completely Other than the self draw the self outside of itself, so that the self no longer can possibly remain in itself. The thing insofar

310

as it is the in-itself, falling in its identity into the nothing, can never be the ground of the self, for it never responds to the self. It never becomes open to the self's advances of love in which the self tends beyond itself, meaning that the self's motion away from itself simply falls back into the self, threatening the self once again with the possibility of annihilation.

Only a thou, a being to whom I immediately say the intimate you of the familiarity of concrete existence, constitutes alterity. The Other is the thou. Once again in Marcel's words, "I am present for the other, and more precisely: for *thou*."[472] The Other my love seeks in its movement away from myself is the being who I encounter as a thou, as one to whom I can speak and one who speaks to me, the one who says "hello, how are you?" and to whom I too reply with a "how are you?" The Other, as Other, must draw me out of myself; she must have a place for me, must be open to my approach. Unlike a thing, she is not inert but responsive. She responds to my exteriorization as the being who in her openness to me, carries me beyond myself. Before the Other, I am no longer myself, but tend wholly toward her, in that my love has arrived at a Being who has a place for my love. On the basis of her openness to my love, the latter no longer returns to myself when directed toward the Other who is the thou.

The thou is a thou precisely by her openness, which is constituted by her tendency away from herself. The Other is not closed off in herself as if she was an in-itself, a thing, but is directed outside of herself. She is a being who is exteriorized, who moves beyond herself away from herself, searching for her own ground. She arises from the nothing, yet at the same time is open to her ground in the exteriorization of love. As

---

[472] Ibid., 154.

moving outside of herself, the thou is the Other. For in being open to ground, she is open

to the approach of beings that are other than herself. Whereas a thing remains closed

from the approach of any other being, the thou recognizes other beings as they approach

her on their own terms. For she in her own love is transposed outside of herself, allowing

her to encounter beings that are not her own. The thing as an in-itself can encounter

nothing, but the thou as loving is a for-the-other, an acknowledgement that she exists

through Being that does not belong to her. She has a tendency away from the nothing in

her love. The thou responds to me and cares for me since she is open to me. She can be

for me, directing her love and attention toward me in my Being.

My love, when directed toward the thou, no longer falls on the inertia of the thing.

Rather, my love finds a being to whom my love can genuinely tend and be oriented. My

love goes outside of myself in loving the thou without return to myself. Were I to

attempt to love a thing, my love for the thing would simply return to myself, collapsing

back in upon itself in the failure of the thing to have a place for my love. In contrast, the

thou as being open to my love is the one who gives to me my Being. I am at all through

the thou who is the Other since she pulls my love from myself so that I might be

exteriorized beyond myself, toward my ground in her alterity.

Reversal

On the basis of the passions of pleasure and pain revealing what is good or bad for

the self, respectively, one might object to the argument for an ethics thus far that I have

made; after all, passion only reveals what is good or evil for this self, without regard for

the Other. Passion only refers to the self, returning to the self in a motion that excludes

312

the Other. For what occurs in passion is the disclosure of what is good and conducive to my Being, or what is detrimental to my Being. According to this objection against my position, passion is simply concerned with the egoist Being of the solipsistic self.

This objection, however, misunderstands the relation between the self, the Other, and Being as revealed in passionate love. For though the self does feel what is conducive or detrimental to its Being, the key is that this Being is not its own Being. The self in not existing by itself exists by the alterity of the Other, the thou, who draws the self out from her own native nothingness. Once Being is understood properly as alterity, as constituted by the Other, reversal occurs. The apparently egoist structure of the passions and of Being that was maintained by Levinas and prior to him by Nietzsche and Kant is reversed, so that not only is passion by revealing what is good and bad for the self not egoist, but passion by revealing what is good and bad for the Being of the self reveals the goodness of the Other and the goodness of Being for the Other. My Being is the Other's rather than my own; therefore, what is good, in the proper meaning of this word, is what is good for the Other. In desiring Being, which I receive from the Other, I desire the Good of the Other. For if I attempt to claim Being for myself as coming from myself and not the Other, I separate myself from the source of my Being. I divorce myself from ground, returning to my own native nothingness, forcing me to confront my death alone. My passion, then, in revealing what is good for my Being, reveals what is Good for the Being of the Other. Passion, as tending beyond itself toward the Other, is for the sake of the Other, not my own sake. That passion is felt in me with regard to what appears as my Being discloses precisely that my Being itself is from and for the Other. With this reversal, the dawn of ethics is now possible.

Dawn

The reversal of passion and the thou as the Other allow for the dawn of a phenomenological ethics. The self arises out of the nothing, nothing-in-itself, as indicated by restlessness. The self is not self-sufficient. In response to this nihility, the self seeks Being. This movement toward Being is love, the tendency of the self away from itself toward some sort of alterity that as inherently other than the self might serve as the ground for the self. Importantly for this ground, as ground, it must not collapse back in on itself if it is to be the basis for the self. This prevents the thing as the in-itself from being ground; only a being that is itself ground, or is at least open to ground, can itself be ground for the self. The self in the exteriorization of passionate love seeks this ground. In its search for ground, the self finds itself before the thou, who appears as the Other who can be the ground for the self. For this thou as the Other is herself open and exposed, implying that she herself is a being who has access to ground. She moves outside of herself toward her foundations that allow her to have Being in the first place.

The thou in her very alterity is thus necessarily the ground of my love, in that the thou is the originary alterity that summoned me out from the nothingness of my birth into my Being. I have my Being since I have been called by the thou to love her. Love, my exteriorization toward the Other, is a being impassioned by the thou, who gave to me my love and therein my Being. I am at all through the Other. Since my Being comes to me from the Other by the love that she has given me that directs me back to herself, my Being is not my own, but the Other. Being is alterity.[473] As directed toward the Being of

---

[473] I hardly mean here to have claimed to have somehow definitively answered the question of the meaning of Being, which would be empty hubris. Rather, what I am suggesting is that phenomenologically, Being

and from the Other, I am directed toward the Good, who is the Other as the one to whom I tend. Yet, once again, just as in the case of the reversal of passion, this Good is not merely my own Good. The Good is the Other; that is, the Other is the Good. The ultimate source of normativity is located here, in what supports the Other in her Being. Whatever is conducive to the Being of the Other or thou is the Good or a good, while whatever is detrimental and threatens this Being of the Other is evil.

The term evil can now, once one stands before the Other, be introduced. Whereas taken only in terms of a solipsistic self, there is only good and bad, there is genuine Good and genuine evil once the relation to the thou is recognized. For the Other, as herself being the foundation for my Being and the Good, comes to me as the one whom I must in love serve. My whole Being, as from her, is for her own sake. My passions are directed at their core toward the Other. Existence no longer concerns me, but the thou, a concern that indicates that she herself is the Good, the proper orientation of my Being. This entails also that what harms the Other, what abandons the Other or reduces her to myself, is evil itself. Evil begins when harm to the Goodness of the Other begins. When the world is not my world, but the world of the Other, when Being is not my Being, but the Being of the Other, when there is something that concerns the thou, evil becomes possible. For this evil threatens the Other, makes her weep and fearful, terrified by her annihilation. To this evil, to this destitution and nothingness of the Other, I must respond. The Other summons me into existence so that I might offer up my Being to her, so that I might orient myself toward being-for-the-Other.

---

reveals itself to me as Other, as alterity, since I only am through alterity, through being directed outside of myself. As such, Being must be understood in terms of alterity, but there remains much more to say on this question that is beyond the scope of this study.

Only now are we entitled to use the term person, for a person is precisely the being who is open to the Other in love for the sake of the Other herself. The self is only more than a mere self when it is constituted as being-for-the-Other, without return to the self—then she becomes a person. Personality is openness to the Other that is being-for-the-Other in the exteriorization of love. Love, given to the self by the Other, brings the self outside of itself so that it might become a person through her attunement of her passions and Being to the Good of the thou. This is the place of phenomenological ethics, where the passion of love reveals to the person her orientation to the Other, and her responsibility to the Other as being-for-the-Other. Phenomenological ethics is at its core, following Levinas, an alterity ethics; but unlike Levinas, and more like Scheler, the source of normativity in phenomenological ethics is disclosed by affectivity or passion.

Further, in being-for-the-Other, the person is brought to her ground. But, since what is conducive or detrimental to the person's Being is revealed by passion, the person being brought to her ground by loving the Other is itself also disclosed by passion. In particular, this is the passion of joy, which is felt by the person when her love joins her to the Other. This jointure is not, however, the jointure of fusion that would elide the difference between the person as the self and the thou. Rather, this jointure consists precisely in the self going outside of itself in the motion of exteriorization, the self as a gift giving itself to the Other. In offering itself up to the Other, the self most fully has its Being. In this gift of self, the person feels joy as ecstasy, as ek-stasis, standing outside of herself in being-for-the-Other. Joy is felt in lived experience as a forgetting of self, as the abandonment of the self before the Goodness of the Other. This joy is not the standard of ethics, but reveals the consummation of ethics in the relation to the Other. Joy is the

supervening indication of having given oneself to the Other. Phenomenological ethics thus unites the Good and Being in the passionate love for the Other, an ethics where the self, in the act of abandoning itself comes to find itself in the Other. This constitutes the point of departure for a phenomenological ethics, an ethics that begins with the revelation in feeling of the Other who is the Good and the ground of my Being.

A Final Objection

There remains a fundamental objection to the argument that I have made, that the Good and Being are convertible and the same, that the ontological and ethical belong to the same sphere; this objection is that I have made Being the standard of the Good. The objection is as follows: by claiming that the Good is revealed by passion to consist in the jointure of Being, I have effectively said that the Good depends wholly upon that which is, on Being. Yet why should one care about the jointure of Being? In the most poignant terms possible, why should I myself as a person care about what existence suggests? After all, am I not free, and as free, can freely choose to ignore Being? Even if in my actions I am going against the conditions for the possibility of my continued existence, so what? I am free to do so; I am free to commit suicide and even ontological suicide by acting against Being. I can freely ignore what Being suggests, allowing me to commit every violence I wish upon the Other so that I can feel my own pleasure. I can invert passion by choosing to ignore its ontological structure, since I do feel pleasure in doing evil, in exalting myself through the assimilation and destruction of the Other. Passion itself does not inform me of the sources of normativity when I can adopt passion as my

317

standard for my pleasure at the expense of the Other. What guide is passion? Being does not constrain me; I remain always free to refuse the mandates of Being, and so to act however I wish, according to my own good that I have established for myself out of myself. What standard could Being possibly be for the Good? In other words, why be good when the Good is grounded in Being? What about Being can actually morally motivate me so that I submit to the Goodness of Being? Why should my heart be dominated by Being, be dominated by the Good that I have freely chosen to reject? Who or what is Being to constrain me, to impose itself upon me, to invest my freedom, when I can invest myself with my own freedom?[474]

This objection is powerful and tempting, but it fails to account for the fundamental meaning of the passionate unity of Being and the Good. In choosing to rebel against the heteronomy of Being in exchange for the autonomy of egoism, though I choose to apparently invest my own freedom, I have actually divested myself of my freedom. My apparently free choice to reject the standard of Being as the source of normativity confines me to myself; by rejecting Being, I reject the thou's around me, for they are the ones who give to me my Being. To truly reject the standard of Being would

---

[474] This objection combines the positions of a Levinasian, a moral skeptic (or at the very least a moral critic), and a moral nihilist all synthetic whole; the rejection of Being as a standard as such is inspired by Levinas and the moral skeptic such as Hume, while the emphasis on unrestricted freedom is the child of one who emphasizes the radical freedom of the self to the end result of what might be called by Levinas effectively a moral nihilism, such as that which is propounded by Sartre and targeted by Levinas. The multiple inspirations of this objection make strange bedfellows, given that this objection is founded in an alliance of Levinas, Sartre, Hume, Levinas' own critique of Sartre, and also by extension Levinas' framing *Totality and Infinity* as a reply to Nietzsche's questioning the value of values. Nietzsche stands are one of the greatest moral critics, though to call him a moral skeptic would be going too far; in no way is Nietzsche, as often portrayed, a moral skeptic let alone a moral nihilist, but his incisive critiques of previous ethics that fail to either establish or address the value of values do grant him the status as one who challenges the ethical to find a ground that is actually able to support it. At its core, this objection that I have posed here to this prolegomena to any future phenomenological ethics is the objection that pushes Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*; "it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality" (21). Does this prolegomena ensure that we are not duped by morality? Or is this prolegomena merely another vain attempt in the history of an error? Another lie, another mask for the value of values?

entail the total rejection of the Other, who I must, if I am to be true to my attempt to invest myself, completely purge from my life. Though the most dangerous possibility here would be murder—and even genocide—the most simple possibility is to reject the Other by removing myself completely from every Other. Removing myself from the Other would require that I move away from every Other, every friend, family, acquaintance, and even stranger; then, I would be required to destroy every tool, piece of clothing, and object in my possession that was made by some Other. After this, after being alone and without anything made by the hands of others, I would, it seems, still need to carve out my own little place under the sun. But would I not then be building things with techniques so often that I learned from some Other? I would have to forget and ignore these too. Only an entirely new way of living, according to only myself, would be permitted. The truth, however, is that this isolation, destroying, and forgetting, is only the beginning of my autonomy. For, to actually be purely autonomous, I would need to abandon the language that I had learned from my parents. After all, I hardly can claim to have made this language. But if I abandon language, I would abandon all linguistic, conceptual, and meditative thinking—I would have abandoned thinking itself. Thinking and language begin precisely when I am summoned by the Other to speak to her, to respond to her cries, at first with a simple greeting. In even this greeting, I signify myself to the Other, I point myself out, standing out among the rest of the world, as the one who is there for the Other. In greeting, I say "here I am." I am signifying my disposition and responsibility to the Other. Language is a signification, a pointing-to, which must always be a pointing-to for the sake of someone. For I do not point out for myself, I do not greet myself, for I need point out nothing to myself or greet myself,

319

when I am already burdened with the task of living suspended between the nihilisms of birth and death.

Yet I have abandoned language and abandoned the Other in my attempt to invest myself. Thus, I can no longer speak, and no longer think at all. I have sought to destroy my summons to responsibility, and in so doing, I have destroyed myself. I am a pure nothing if I invest myself with my freedom, rather than being sub-jected to the investiture of the Other. I can never invest myself; my attempt destroys itself from the beginning. Every attempt to reject or dominate the Other presupposes and affirms the primacy and priority of the Other over me. I am subject to the Being given to me from the height of the Good of the Other, a Good that is revealed to me by love, a passion that calls me to offer myself to the Other, to live for her and to sacrifice myself for her. In this sacrifice, I am. I am in saying to you, "here I am." The fact of the "I am" is the fact of the "here I am"—the fact of "there you are!"

Conclusion: Deep Kantianism and Phenomenological Ethics

Based on the argument that I have given in this final chapter, phenomenological ethics would turn out at its core to be closer to the alterity ethics of Levinas than the value ethics of Scheler. For the source of normativity that I have ascribed to phenomenological ethics is that that has been suggested by Levinas, the alterity of the Other, which I have attempted to push further through an additional appeal to Marcel that emphasizes the uniqueness of this Other who I encounter, a thou. Phenomenological ethics can safely be called alterity ethics. The chief Good, to employ Aristotle's locution, is the Other. In terms of its source of normativity, value ethics turns out to be problematized by Deep

320

Kantianism, for value, the good of value ethics, is not located in the world. As distinct from the beings and especially the person of the world, as distinct from Being or ground, value is isolated, becoming a foreign imposition upon life in its having not been rooted in the concrete others of existence. Consequently, value as such must be rejected.

However, this does not mean that none of Scheler's insights are preserved in the phenomenological ethics that I have outlined here. For Scheler, against Levinas who in his Deep Kantianism has denigrated passion and denied its ethically or ontologically revelatory role, maintains that wherever the source of normativity is to be found, it will be revealed by feeling. Passion reveals the Good, which in my reading means that passion reveals the Good that is the Other or thou. Moreover, passion in the particular form of joy will be present when one lives the good life, since this joy reveals that the self has been exteriorized in love outside of itself for the Other. Joy reveals the enactment of Being-for-the-Other. Unlike Levinas and Kant, Scheler recognizes the necessity of passion for the task of the ethical.

Yet Scheler's notion of passion, as directed toward value, remains in itself ungrounded in the other person. To return passion to its concrete ontological roots, we had to appeal to Heidegger's analysis of *Befindlichkeit*, disposition or as I have suggested that it can be read, as passivity and perhaps even passion. Disposition allows for and manifests itself in mood or feeling, revealing the world in its ontological character with regard to the Being of the self. Passion is a felt intentionality that reveals what is both ontologically and ethically informative, ethical in the sense that in his reading of Aristotle in 1924, passion reveals what is conducive or good for one's Being. The character of this

good as such beyond having been ontologized, though, remains utterly ignored by Heidegger.

This neglect of the ethical demanded that the insights of this tradition be brought together to overcome Deep Kantianism, to free phenomenological ethics of its assumption with Kant that being is bare and devoid of ethical implications and that the good must be founded in a void beyond existence. On a new ontological ground, on the basis of the lived experience of the nothingness of the self as the condition for the possibility of being opened in exteriorization to the Other, phenomenological ethics may be established. The source of normativity as the Other is indicated by the inner structure and jointure of Being itself. In the sense of that by which, the ground, through which all things are and provides the basis for the way that things are, the ontological serves as the place for the manifestation of the Goodness of the Other. Against Deep Kantianism, ethics is to be located in the ontological itself, where from the beginning the Good is disclosed from within the jointure of Being. In other words, to find the Good, one must turn to what passion says. The heart, in being ordered to the ontological affairs of existence, reveals how I am to live, reveals the Good.

The three primary characteristics of a phenomenological ethics are thus as follows:

> I. The Good is the Other or thou.
> II. Ontology provides the standard of the Good.
> III. The Good is revealed to and known by the person through love that in exteriorizing the person culminates in joy.

I. The Good, the ultimate direction of life and the source of normativity, is the Other herself. What is good is what benefits the Other, what is for the sake of the Other as other, while what is evil is what harms the Other, what rejects and does violence to the

322

Other. As a result, the person must in charity, in gift of self in love, offer her whole life, her whole existence, to the Other; she must be-for-the-Other.

II. This source of normativity, the chief Good, is grounded in an ontology. To discover the Good and find the place of the ethical that would indicate what the ethical consists in, one must appeal to Being. Being itself, the concrete existence that comprises and ultimately grounds the person, is the place of the Good. Ethical disputes can thus come closer to being settled by an appeal to ontology, to what the structure of existence itself suggests.

III. The joint ethical and ontological task is disclosed concretely by passion in love and joy. The orientation of love reveals how the person is to live, and in living her life according to the revelation of love, she will find joy in Being-for-the-Other. The ethical life, against Kant and Levinas, is a joyous affair. To be for the Other brings joy to the person, who rejoices when she is exteriorized in charity or love for the Other. When she lives her life well, she will find joy.

These three characteristics provide the basis for a more developed future phenomenological ethics that on an ontological and passionate ground can approach the Good, with the goal, like in ancient and medieval philosophy, of providing therapy, of healing the wounded hearts of those all around us. What is interesting here also is that all three of these characteristics are found first in Augustine, even if not systematically developed as a whole. There is thus a close link between phenomenological and Augustinian ethics. This is precisely why I began this dissertation with epigraphs from Augustine, who, more than anyone else, has brought these insights, even if they remain in their infancy, together in a single philosophy. Augustine provides an ethics that joyously

affirms life in all of its struggles, in even its nothingness, rather than fleeing from life as did Kant. Even in its nothingness, and in fact precisely in its nothingness, in its suffering and trauma, can one find the Other in life. Finding this Other, loving this Other for her own sake, is the task of life. Through this Being-for-the-Other, a person might feel herself moved outside of herself more and more, until she finds herself in and for the Other, this Other, this thou who she loves with her whole Being, for whom her whole Being *is*. As Love, as for-this-Other, as for thou, ethics becomes religion—the receptivity to the vocation that each one of us has for thou.

Bibliography

The primary sources include Scheler, Levinas, Heidegger, Kant, and Augustine.

<u>Primary Sources</u>
Augustine. *City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods. New York: Modern Library Press, 1993.

——. *Confessions*. Translated by John Ryan. New York: Image, 2014.

——. *Confessions,* Books 1-8. Translated by Caroline Hammond. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

——. *Confessions,* Books 9-13. Translated by Caroline Hammond. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.

——. *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. Translated by David Mosher. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977.

——. *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*. In *On Genesis*, translated Edmund Hill. Hyde Park: New City Press, 2002.

——. *On the Trinity*. Translated by Edmund Hill. Hyde Park: New City Press, 1991.

Heidegger, Martin. *Augustine and Neo-Platonism.* In *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, translated by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

——. *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy.* Translated by Robert D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

——. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Translated by Scott M. Campbell. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

——. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

——. *The Concept of Time.* Translated by Ingo Farin. New York: Continuum, 2011.

——. *The Concept of Time*. Translated by William McNeill. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

——. *The Essence of Human Freedom.* Translated by Ted Sadler. New York: Continuum, 2005.

———. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

———. *Introduction to Metaphysics.* Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

———. *Introduction to Phenomenological Research.* Translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

———. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Translated by Richard Taft. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

———. "Letter on Humanism." In *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

———. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic.* Translated by Michael Heim. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

———. *Negativity. A Confrontation with Hegel Approached from Negativity*. In *Hegel,* translated by Joseph Arel and Niels Feuerhahn. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

———. *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research.* Translated by Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

———. *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom.* Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985.

———. "What is Metaphysics?" In *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement.* Translated by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

———. *Critique of Practical Reason.* In *Practical Philosophy*, translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. *Critique of Pure Reason.* Translated by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

———. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. In *Practical Philosophy*, translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. *Lectures on Ethics.* Translated by Louis Infield. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980.

——. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone.* Edited by Allen Wood and George di Giovanni. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998.

Levinas, Emmanuel. "Diachrony and Representation." In *Time and the Other*, translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.

——. "Ethics of the Infinite." In *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*, edited by Richard Kearney, 65-84. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.

——. *Existence and Existents*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1978.

——. "Nonintentional Consciousness." In *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other.* Translated by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

——. "Is Ontology Fundamental?" In *Basic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, 1-10. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

——. "The Old and the New." In *Time and the Other*, translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.

——. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence.* Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981.

——. *Is it Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*. Edited by Jill Robbins. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

——. *Time and the Other*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.

——. *Totality and Infinity*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.

——. "Useless Suffering." In *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other.* Translated by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Scheler, Max. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*. Translated by Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

——. *The Nature of Sympathy*. Translated by Peter Heath. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008.

———. "Ordo Amoris." In *Selected Philosophical Essays*, translated by David R. Lachterman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

<u>Secondary Sources</u>
Atterton, Peter. "The Proximity between Levinas and Kant: the Primacy of Pure Practical Reason." *The Eighthteenth Century* 40, no. 3 (1999): 244-260.

Bloechl, Jeffery. "Excess and Desire: a Commentary on *Totality and Infinity Section I, Part I*." In *The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Levinas Between Jews and Christians*, edited by Kevin Hart and Michael Signer. New York: Fordham, 2010.

Blosser, Philip. *Scheler's Critique of Kant's Ethics.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995.

———. "Moral and Nonmoral Values: A Problem in Scheler's Ethics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48, no. 1 (1987): 139-143.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970.

Caputo, Peter. *Sorge and Kardia: The Hermeneutics of Factical Life and the Categories of the Heart*. In *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought,* edited by Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren, 327-343. Albany: State University of New York, 1994.

Carman, Taylor. *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse and Authenticity in* Being and Time. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Chalier, Catherine. "The Bared Self: Levinas and the Hassidic Tradition." In *Religious Existentialists and the Redemption of Feeling*, edited by Anthony Malagon and Abi Doukhan. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

Critchley, Simon. "The Null Basis-Being of a Nullity, Or Between Two Nothings." In *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, edited by Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch, 145-153. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011.

Crosby, John. "The Individuality of Human Persons: A Study in the Ethical Personalism of Max Scheler." *The Review of Metaphysics* 52, no. 1 (1998): 21-50.

Crowell, Steven. *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

———. "*Sorge* or *Selbstbewußtsein?* Heidegger and Korsgaard on the Sources of Normativity." *European Journal of Philosophy* 15, no. 3 (2007): 315-333.

Dahlstrom, Daniel. "Missing in Action: Affectivity in *Being and Time*." In *Heidegger on Affect,* edited by Christos Hadjioannou, 105-125. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

——. "Temptation, Self-Possession and Resoluteness: Heidegger's Reading of *Confessions X*, and What is the Good of *Being and Time?*" *Research in Phenomenology* 39 (2009): 248-265.

Dalton, Drew. "Otherwise than Nothing: Heidegger, Levinas and the Phenomenology of Evil." *Philosophy and Theology* 21, no. 1-2 (2009): 105-128.

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on The First Philosophy*. In *A Discourse on Method, Meditations, and Principles*, translated by John Veitch. London: Everyman, 1992.

Frings, Manfred S. *The Mind of Max Scheler*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001.

——. "The Background of Max Scheler's 1927 Reading of *Being and Time*: a Critique of a Critique through Ethics." *Philosophy Today* 36, no.2 (1992): 99-113

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Oudemans, Th. C.W., et al. *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought.* Edited by Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren. Albany: State University of New York, 1994.

Gasche, Rodolphe. "A Material *A Priori?* On Max Scheler's Critique of Kant's Formal Ethics." *The Philosophical Forum* 41, no. 1-2 (2010): 113-126.

Greisch, Jean. "The 'Play of Transcendence' and the Question of Ethics." In *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, edited by Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew, 99-116. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Hadjioannou, Christos. "Introduction." In *Heidegger on Affect,* edited by Christos Hadjioannou, xi-xvii. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Harmon, Justin. "The Normative Architecture of Reality: Towards an Object-Oriented Ethics*."* PhD diss. University of Kentucky, 2016.

Hatab, Lawrence. "Heidegger and the Question of Empathy" In *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, edited by Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew, 249-272. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Hemming, Laurence. "A Transcendental Hangover: Levinas, Heidegger and the Ethics of Alterity." *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18, no. 2 (2005): 45-65.

Hildebrand, Dietrich von. *The Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*. Edited by John Henry Crosby. South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2007.

——. *Ethics*. Steubenville: Hildebrand Press, 2020.

——. *The Nature of Love*. Translated by John F. Crosby. South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2009.

Hodge, Joanna. *Heidegger and Ethics*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Horton, Sarah. "The Joy of Desire: Understanding Levinas's Desire of the Other as Gift." *Continental Philosophy Review* 51 (2018): 193-210.

Hume, David. *A Treatise on Human Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Keane, Niall. "The Affects of Rhetoric and Reconceiving the Nature of Possibility." In *Heidegger on Affect*, edited by Christos Hadjioannou, 47-67. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Kisiel, Theodore. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Lawton, Jr. Philip. "Levinas' Notion of the 'There Is.'" *Philosophy Today* 20, no. 1 (1976): 67-76.

Lewis, Michael. *Heidegger and the Place of Ethics: Being-with in the Crossing of Heidegger's Thought*. London: Continuum, 2005.

Loidolt, Sophie. "Levinas on Emotion and Affectivity." In *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, edited by Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer. New York: Routledge, 2019.

——. "Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook for the History of Phenomenology*, edited by D. Zahavi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

——. "The 'Daimon' that Speaks Through Love: a Phenomenological Ethics of the Absolute Ought." In *Ethics and Phenomenology,* edited by M. Sanders and J. J. Wisnewski. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012.

——. "Husserl and the Fact of Practical Reason: Phenomenological Claims Toward a Philosophical Ethics." *Santalka Filosofija* 17, no. 3 (2009): 50-61.

O'Brien, Mahon. "Being, Nothingness and Anxiety." In *Heidegger on Affect*, edited by Christos Hadjioannou, 1-27. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Olafson, Frederick. *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: a Study of* Mitsein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Owens, Thomas. "Scheler's 'Emotive' Ethics." *CrossCurrents* 16, no 2 (1966):143-152.

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

Marion, Jean-Luc. *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Translated by Stephen E. Lewis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

——. *Prolegomena to Charity*. Translated by Stephen E. Lewis. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.

Moati, Raoul. *Levinas and the Night of Being: a Guide to* Totality and Infinity. Translated by Daniel Wyche. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*. Translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. "Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics.'" In *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, edited by Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew, 65-85. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Porphyry, *To Marcella*. In *Hellenistic Philosophy*, Second Edition, translated by Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Raffoul, Francois. *The Origins of Responsibility*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Reid, James. *Heidegger's Moral Ontology.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Rinne, Pärttyli. *Kant on Love*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

Rovira, Rogelio. "On the Manifold Meaning of Value according to Dietrich von Hildebrand and the Need for a Logic of the Concept of Value." *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (2015): 115-132.

Sallis, John. *Elemental Discourses*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.

——. "Levinas and the Elemental." *Research in Phenomenology* 28 (1998): 152-159.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1985.

Spader, Peter. *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.

Steinbock, Anthony. *Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014.

Surber, Jere Paul. "The Priority of the Personal: An 'Other' Tradition in Modern Continental Philosophy." *The Personalist Forum* 8, no. 1 (1992): 225-231.

Tallon, Andrew. "Nonintentional Affectivity, Affective Intentionality, and the Ethical in Levinas' Philosophy." In *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, 107-121. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Vacek, Edward. "Scheler's Phenomenology of Love." *The Journal of Religion* 62, no. 2 (1982): 156-177.

Westphal, Merold. *In Praise of Heteronomy: Making Room for Revelation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.