

HUSSERL AND LEVINAS:  
TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE EPOCHE

I claim no other right than that of speaking according to my best lights, principally before myself but in the same manner also before others, as one who has lived in all its seriousness the fate of a philosophical existence.

Edmund Husserl  
*The Crisis*, I, 7, 18

Our analyses claim to be in the spirit of Husserlian philosophy, whose letter has been the recall in our epoch of the permanent phenomenology, restored to its rank of being a method for all philosophy.

Emmanuel Levinas  
*Otherwise Than Being*, 183

1. THE METHODOLOGICAL QUESTION

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology offered the possibility of once again *doing* philosophy at a time when funereal signs were forecasting the immanent demise of the philosophical enterprise. Itself a new beginning, Husserl's phenomenology argued that philosophy is a beginning anew, a taking up of the task of thinking and being in an original way. Many would respond to Husserl's call. And among them would be Emmanuel Levinas, who perhaps spoke for many of Husserl's students when he said that "it was with Husserl that I discovered the concrete meaning of the very possibility of 'working in philosophy' . . . ." How was it that Husserl's philosophy offered such a possibility?

The overestimation of positivistic science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of what Husserl would describe as the objective pole of the intentional arc, the presupposition of a ready-made world, led to an abstraction and a suppression of the value of the living subject and a rejection of the importance of subjective experience. The naive realism of the natural attitude, which presupposes the substantial being of the world, has forgotten the methodological lesson learned from Descartes' doubt. Taking for granted the objectivity of the object,

it was thought from the "natural attitude" of empirical science to be merely a matter of time before the absolute truth about the totality of "that which is" reveals itself to the rational comprehension of the investigating scientist. In this positivistic scheme of things, philosophy was retained but merely for its explanatory powers. Speculative or metaphysical philosophy was placed under suspicion and thought to be more or less superfluous. Husserl's philosophy thus arose as an abiding resistance to this positivistic judgement of philosophy's superfluity and lack of rigor.

Particularly in his approach to the question of methodology, taken up at first within the context of a critique of logical positivism and psychologism, and later in the context of the "crisis" of European science, Husserl offered a whole new approach to the process of thinking and a whole new understanding of the word "knowledge." This is what gripped Levinas when he read Husserl: the possibility of working in philosophy "without being straightaway enclosed in a system of dogmas, but at the same time without running the risk of proceeding by chaotic intuitions. The impression was at once of opening and method . . ." (EI 28–29) The question of method here is, of course, not merely an epistemological or heuristic question, but a question that reaches toward the very heart of both Husserl's and Levinas' philosophical work, and is the central interest of this present investigation.

There is no doubt that Levinas' philosophy has been thoroughly influenced by Husserl, as the epigraph to this essay makes clear, especially in Levinas' adoption and transformation of Husserl's phenomenological method. In Husserl's philosophy itself, however, according to our interpretation, there is also a radical transformation of methodological perspective as found in the earlier work and in the later.<sup>2</sup> Now this interpretation leads to an interesting question: given the time-frame of Levinas' student days with Husserl, could there have been a reciprocity of influence? Could it have been that Husserl, the undisputed philosophical master at Freiburg in the late twenties, was influenced by the diligent young Jewish student from Lithuania by the name of Emmanuel Levinas, who studied under Husserl at Freiburg and who published a very positive and yet somewhat critical reflection on Husserl's *Logical Investigations*<sup>3</sup> and *Ideas I*<sup>4</sup> entitled *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*<sup>5</sup> (while Husserl was still working on *The Crisis*<sup>6</sup>)? It seems to me that the possibility of such a reciprocity of influence is suggested not only by the evidence of certain published

texts which will be considered below, but also by the fact that this would be consistent with the basic tenets of Husserl's own phenomenological philosophy, a method which is essentially a way of life.

In order to investigate these questions we will focus on the connection between Husserl and Levinas in regard to the development of the phenomenological reduction, the epoche, from its inception in Husserl's philosophy to its incorporation and radical transformation in the phenomenology of Levinas. As was mentioned above, we will look at Levinas' critique of Husserl's methodology, a critique which Levinas first presents in *The Theory of Intuition*. Furthermore, in this connection, it will be necessary to consider Levinas' claim to have surpassed Husserl's formulation by supplanting or substituting Husserl's supposed priority of *theoretical reason* with the priority of *ethical response*. We will evaluate this critique in terms of our analysis of the development of the epoche within Husserl's philosophy, arguing that Levinas' critique of Husserl's reduction is valid only for the earlier, Cartesian version of the epoche but not for the more radical version worked out in *The Crisis*. Husserl's radicalization of the epoche in this late, unfinished text, where he himself is critical of the Cartesian reduction, places him close to the position of Levinas' critique, as if Husserl were responding to Levinas. Thus, as I said, one cannot help but wonder if Levinas worked out his critique based on revelations from unpublished works made by Husserl in his formal and informal lectures which already anticipated such a critique or whether Husserl was influenced by Levinas in the clear and forthright change of attitude reflected in Husserl's formulation of the epoche in *The Crisis*. Finally, and contrary to certain commentators, we will argue that the epoche is crucial to the understanding of the entirety of Husserl's project, and that the transformation of the epoche as treated in the earlier work and in the later represents a movement in Husserl's thought from the priority of theory to the priority of the ethical, a movement that will become most fully explicated in Levinas' original philosophical work.

## 2. HUSSERL'S EARLY FORMULATIONS OF THE REDUCTION

Keeping in mind that Levinas' early work on Husserl, and the critique of Husserl contained therein, was limited to Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, let us look briefly at Husserl's predelineation of the

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reduction in the former of these two early works and then at his fuller Cartesian treatment of it in the latter.

In *Logical Investigations* Husserl discusses the essential principle of his phenomenological investigation of the ground of universal knowledge as a certain "thinking over" which is a "freedom from presuppositions." (LI, II, 7, 263—64) He amplifies this principle of presuppositionlessness by saying that it is more of a "shedding of light" than factual explanation: "Its aim is not to *explain* knowledge in the psychological or psychophysical sense as a *factual* occurrence in objective nature, but to *shed light* on the *Idea* of knowledge in its constitutive elements and laws." (LI, II, 7, 265) Once the constitutive dimension of the mind is recognized, "adequate" or "fulfilled" knowledge can no longer be deduced from principles or subjects which somehow exist in-themselves, independent of the mind in a Kantian sense. A new freedom is now required to detach the phenomenological consciousness from the prejudice of objectivity and the unquestioned bias of naive empiricism.

Husserl takes this theme up again in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" (1911) in the context of discussing "historicism," the prejudice that assumes that history can be made into an object that can be grasped independently of the historical subject who is always already involved in that process, always already immersed in the ongoingness of history.<sup>7</sup> Insofar as subjective self-consciousness is itself historical ("historicity"), the objectification of the historical ("historicism") will always fail to arrive at the true, or fully "valid" essence of any historical object. Rather, what is needed, Husserl claims, is an "entering vitally into an historically reconstructed spiritual formation" through "philosophical intuition" and "the phenomenological grasp of essences." (PRS 128, 147) It was exactly this that Levinas set out to describe and criticize in his doctoral dissertation.

But this is not merely a methodological or theoretical problem. Rather, it must be a response to a "spiritual need" which "afflicts us, a need that leaves no point of our lives untouched." (PRS 140) In order to overcome these difficulties which are virtually ignored by empiricism, naturalism and historicism, a radically new "science" is needed. Far from avoiding the historical content of the philosophical tradition, this radically new procedure must "penetrate the soul" of the tradition's words and theories. History, as language, thus becomes a region of phenomenological analysis; the meaning of history demands an inten-

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tional analysis itself, an analysis of the essence of history (its “fundamental structures”) as the constituted correlate (what will become the “noema”) of historical self-consciousness. A universal, “scientific” philosophy is thus needed, according to this early methodological formulation by Husserl, which “for the sake of time” does not “sacrifice eternity.” (PRS 141)

It is precisely through the epoche that, Husserl believes, this “scientific clarity” can be achieved. Like history itself, however, the epoche cannot be grasped as a scientific object. It is a process of self-transformation, “rising from below” (PRS 147), Husserl says, a “living” methodology which is non-conceptualizable as such. One cannot merely *think* one’s way through the “universal” epoche. The epoche, as a continual approach to the origin of its own being, is always a doing again, always a beginning anew. “Philosophy,” Husserl says, “is essentially a science of true beginning.” (PRS 146) Perhaps that is why Husserl himself returned to the epoche again and again; not because of any inherent defect or the failure of earlier attempts to formulate it, or because he did not yet have the procedure worked out right, but because this beginning again, as Merleau-Ponty also understood, is itself the essence of philosophy. That is why *Ideas*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and *The Crisis* are all subtitled “Introduction” to phenomenological philosophy. It was this methodological possibility of beginning anew that attracted Husserl’s many students, including Emmanuel Levinas.

### 3. THE CARTESIAN VARIATION

But let us move on from these incipient forms of the epoche to the Cartesian reduction of *Ideas* I. It is necessary to keep in mind from the outset of our analyses here, Husserl’s own reaction to this early formulation. From the perspective of *The Crisis* the Cartesian epoche of *Ideas* I is inadequate. It has “a great shortcoming,” Husserl admits. It prematurely achieves the transcendental “in one leap,” and consequently finds itself with a transcendental ego that is empty of all but the most formal content — merely the bare universal, as Hegel might put it, not yet fully explicated. (C III A 43 155) What is helpful about the Cartesian epoche, however, is that it brings to light for the first time in Husserl’s work the fundamental methodological problems of transcen-

dental phenomenology, problems that will be carried over, re-thought, and expanded in *The Crisis*.

Husserl's actual performance of the Cartesian reduction in *Ideas I* is laid out in a series of stages in the first four chapters of the text. The development has a rather sudden and unexpected culmination at the end of Section 46 where Husserl declares without reservation that his inquiry has already "reached its climax" insofar as he has now achieved that peculiar kind of knowledge which is the foundation of the reduction and which, consequently, will allow for "the detachability in principle of the natural world from the domain of consciousness. . . ." This knowledge is thus the work of "the region of pure consciousness" in the ego's immanent reflection upon experience (*Erlebnis*). (*Ideas I* 46 131–32) Husserl seems well aware of the fact that the establishment of this region of pure consciousness (and hence the very possibility of the reduction) is wholly dependent upon the fundamental distinction between experienced things or objects, which are "transcendent," and the essentially different type of reality which is experience (*Erlebnis*) given through immanent reflection: the first — although predelineated in a manner which is *apparently* complete — is necessarily perspectival, *spatial*, always inadequate to its object and, at best, only able to be adumbrated or sketched out in a partial and contingent way. The latter, however, is not a spatial object, not "presented" at all; it has no sides as such. It can be perceived "immanently," through intuition, as Levinas showed in his work on Husserl, and *only* immanently. It is therefore "given" indubitably and absolutely.

Now even though a mental process, that is, an inner experience, is given absolutely in its "presentation," nevertheless, "in respect to its essence" it is a part of the whole stream of mental life and consequently can never be grasped in "its full unity" or completeness. But *this* "incompleteness" of the essence of an experience in regard to the whole stream of experiences, is essentially different, Husserl contends, from the incompleteness of the perception of a physical thing, which is always transcendent, and is restricted, therefore, not only in terms of possible future perceptions, but also in terms of the perspectival limitations of the sensual perception of the thing within any given perceptual "now." There is some similarity between these incompletenesses, Husserl allows, but a radical, essential difference in their transcendent and immanent potential to be grasped. In any "now" of any immediate, given experience, there is a full, adequate, and absolute

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apprehension of the essence of *that* now. Not so with transcendent, spatial objects. The first movement of the Cartesian reduction has thus secured the bare possibility for a non-objective, apodictic knowledge.

In Section 97 of *Ideas* I, Husserl more or less completes the description of the Cartesian epoche when he accounts for the nature of perception itself insofar as this is not a process of seeing an object “out there,” independent of consciousness — as it is thought to be by a subject in the “natural attitude.” Husserl argues this point through his well-known example of the hallucination. Clearly, it is possible that I may perceive an object which, through further perceptions, turns out to be not what I thought it was at all. What I think I see, may, at the very next moment, turn out to have been an illusion or a hallucination — a point which Husserl makes in Section 88 where he first introduces the concept of the “noema.” And yet, before I knew that it was an illusion, I did, indeed, have an experience of it as what I believed it to be. Consequently, Husserl concludes, perceptual experiences cannot be dependent upon some static, selfsame object purportedly “out there” in space, independent of consciousness. Nevertheless, I *did* have a perception of something, and my perception “as such” did have a certain reality. But if it was not the result of light bouncing off some independent object or the result of the action of a thing-in-itself, then how did this perception come about and what is its nature? Husserl’s claim in this text is, of course, that the perception was constituted through an intentional process which in-formed “hyletic” sense data with a certain “gift of meaning.” (*Ideas* I 97 262)

In the final analysis, the Cartesian epoche and the “constitutive” dimension of consciousness (noesis/noema structure) worked out in *Ideas* I establishes for Husserl “an absolute sphere of materials and noetic forms” which can be grasped and described in their absolute purity by the phenomenologist as the real truth of the perceptual process, an “ultimate source” that Husserl believes offers “the only conceivable solution of the deepest problems of knowledge,” because the intentional analysis of the real components of perception would provide, if Husserl is correct, “objectively valid knowledge.” (*Ideas* I 97 263) In other words, given the claim of the phenomenological reduction to secure an absolute vantage point, together with the claim of the constitutive nature of intentionality — the constitutive function of the transcendental ego — the world of the transcendent object “out there” is now understood to be wholly phenomenal or “irreal,” and the under-

lying truth or real (*reelle*) process of perception can now be grasped through intentional analysis and pure phenomenological description, steps of the “method” which follow upon the prior suspension of the thesis of the natural world. But the *epoche* here is understood as an intellectual exercise, a game of Cartesian doubt, except that it is meant to be a permanent condition. Unfortunately, however, in suspending the thesis of the natural world, the Cartesian *cogito* lost its foothold in the lived world. It is at this point in Husserl’s development of the theory of the *epoche* that Levinas comes on the scene.

#### 4. LEVINAS’ CRITIQUE OF THE CARTESIAN REDUCTION

Levinas’ criticism of the Cartesian version of the *epoche* in *The Theory of Intuition* (1930) focuses on the charge of intellectualism: it is the formalism and abstractness of the Cartesian *epoche* that is the problem. In Levinas’ view, already at this early point in his career, a view which will later become a dominant part of his own philosophical thought, the practice of phenomenology requires sustained *effort*. It is not something that can be accomplished in the blink of an eye, as if the understanding of the necessity for the reduction were an actual accomplishment of it. This merely abstract and empty theoretical accomplishment is, Levinas asserts, in 1928, a disconnection from the lived world: “For Husserl, philosophical intuition is a reflection on life considered in all its concrete fullness and wealth, a life which is considered but no longer lived.” And he continues:

The reflection upon life is divorced from life itself, and one cannot see its ties with the destiny and the metaphysical essence of man. The natural attitude is not purely contemplative; the world is not purely an object of scientific investigation. Yet it seems that man *suddenly* accomplishes the phenomenological reduction by a purely theoretical act of reflection on life. Husserl offers no explanation for this change of attitude and does not even consider it a problem. Husserl does not raise the metaphysical problem of the situation of the *Homo philosophus*. (TI 142)

In the analysis of the reduction which follows this critique of the priority of theoretical thought, it is clear that Levinas is dealing with the Cartesian reduction. (See TI 146–47) He sees, nevertheless, how it is that the *epoche* is of crucial importance to phenomenological investigation in that it produces access to transcendental consciousness: “it is not a psychological but a transcendental consciousness which is revealed to us in the phenomenological reduction.” (TI 148) Thus, the

epoche is not a temporary condition like the Cartesian doubt, but, on the contrary, "the reduction has an absolute value for Husserl" because it wants "to return to absolute being or life, the source of all being." (TI 149)

Thus, although Levinas is moved by the possibilities for doing philosophy opened up by Husserl's reduction, possibilities which lie on the hither side of the natural attitude, he does not think that Husserl has gone far enough methodologically since the possibilities are presented "to a purely contemplative and theoretical sight which considers life but is distinct from it." (TI 149) Besides being abstract and theoretical, Levinas further points out that "the works of Husserl published so far make only very brief mentions of an intersubjective reduction," although Levinas asserts, that "this intersubjective reduction and all the problems that arise from it have much preoccupied Husserl," a fact supported by "unpublished works" that Levinas heard about but which he would not use prior to their publication. But one wonders whether Husserl also heard Levinas; whether Husserl read the last chapter of Levinas' *Theory of Intuition*?

##### 5. HUSSERL'S RADICALIZATION OF THE EPOCHE IN *THE CRISIS*

Let us turn back to Husserl and attempt to ascertain whether he deals with Levinas' criticisms in his later work and, if so, how. First of all, and contrary to those who would argue that there is no real change in Husserl's position between his earlier and later work, we have already pointed out above that Husserl himself criticizes his earlier "Cartesian approach" to the reduction admitting that "it leads to the transcendental ego in one leap, as it were, it brings this ego into view as explication; so one is at a loss, at first to know what has been gained by it, much less how, starting with this, a completely new sort of fundamental science, decisive for philosophy, has been attained." (*Crisis* III 155) Despite Husserl's own critique, this Cartesian formulation, influenced by Husserl's reading of Descartes' method and his desire for scientific rigor, is of benefit in that it brings to light for the first time the basic problems of developing a method for achieving the transcendental attitude, as was mentioned above, problems which would later be addressed in the apparently aborted project of the *Cartesian Meditations*,<sup>8</sup> and, finally re-thought and radicalized in *The Crisis*. The Cartesian reduction lacks

a resolution to the “how” of intersubjective world-constitution. It also lacks recognition of the concrete, personal, and communal dimensions of Husserl’s later formulation of the transcendental, which takes as its starting point, as if in response to Levinas’ challenge, the “lived-world” and Psychology, from which Husserl develops two new forms of the epoche meant to compensate for what was lacking in the earlier model.

In contrast with the Cartesian version of the epoche, the phenomenological reduction found in *The Crisis* has more of a practical (ethical) and spiritual orientation than the “scientifically rigorous” renderings of *Ideas I* and the earlier works. These tentative and self-critical probings into the new region achieved through the reduction are propaedeutic to what appears in its maturity in *The Crisis*. One might argue that the reduction is the reduction and it really does not change. But in the Cartesian formulation the achievement of presuppositionlessness is understood as the achievement of a kind of scientific objectivity, a freedom from constraints, perhaps, and the intentional analysis is over-emphasized and depersonalized. Certainly there is a sameness about the reduction found in its incipient form among the *Logical Investigations* and other early works, the Cartesian reduction of *Ideas I*, and the reductions from the lived-world and from Psychology found in *The Crisis*. This should not, however, mislead us concerning the significant differences that separate the earlier from the later epoche. In the final analysis, Husserl’s thinking itself must be understood according to its own first principle as a perpetual beginning anew (C, III, A, 43, 154), a “constant becoming through a constant intentionality of development.” (*Crisis* Appendix N 338)

In *The Crisis* Husserl does not call the reader to the stark methodological manipulation of the object that is found in the ruminations of *Ideas I* but to a radically personal self-transformation. We are not merely called to a new way of seeing, to a certain perception of a new region of being, but to a new way of being. Husserl describes the initial shock of the reduction in one place as comparable to a religious conversion:

Perhaps it will become manifest that the total phenomenological attitude and the epoche belonging to it are destined in essence to effect, at first, a *complete personal transformation*, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion, which then, however, over and above this, bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to mankind as such. (*Crisis* III, A, 43, 154)

What does Husserl mean by saying that the full, universal epoche is comparable to a religious conversion? We must read this keeping in mind that Husserl explicitly warned against misinterpreting transcendental phenomenology as any kind of mystical or supermundane "transcendentalism," while at the same time recalling that he does not for a moment deny that phenomenology, as a philosophical *way of life*, is a *thoroughly spiritual* process with a "spiritual heritage" and a "spiritual unity" in which it is the task of the individual philosopher "to carry forward . . . the self-reflection of his forebears . . . the chain of thinkers, the social interrelation of their thinking, the community of their thought, and transform it into a living present for us . . ." (*Crisis* II, 15, 74) Levinas was certainly attracted by this challenge that would forever transform the post-Husserlian philosophical scene.

In *The Crisis* the transformation of the whole person through practicing the epoche becomes, as Husserl says, a "vocation," a "habit," a way of life, a practice that is taken up every day as an ongoing inter-subjective self-transformation. This is the "quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers," Husserl says, "our inner personal vocation [which] bears within itself at the same time the responsibility for the true being of mankind." Philosophers are thus "*functionaries of mankind*;" there is an inherently practical orientation to phenomenology, an ethical dimension involved in, not the mere reflection on, but the practice of the epoche. Consequently, Husserl claims that "together with the new task [of phenomenology] and its universal apodictic ground, the *practical* possibility of a new philosophy will prove itself: through its execution." (*Crisis* I, 7, 17–18) The radicality of this dimension of praxis as ethical action is that it is a process whose uniqueness rests in its being the ground of its own being (cf. *Crisis* III, A, 53, 181). The constitutive operation of the transcendental "ego" in *The Crisis*, involves the orchestration of a spiritual community which, through the practice of the epoche, achieves the mature development of ontic validity in self-evident experience and which now begins taking "responsibility" for itself and all others in the world, as well as the world itself which it is creating. In this formulation of the epoche, we not only find a response to the challenge posed to Husserl by Levinas in *The Theory of Intuition*, but we find also here in an incipient form what will become the full-blown *ethical epoche* of Levinas' philosophy.

## 6. LEVINAS' ETHICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE EPOCHE

For Husserl's transcendental reduction will a putting between parentheses suffice — a type of writing, of committing oneself with the world which sticks like ink to the hands that push it off? One should have to go all the way to the nihilism of Nietzsche's poetic writing reversing irreversible time in vortices, to the laughter which refuses language.

Emmanuel Levinas  
*Otherwise Than Being*, 8

Despite the fact that Levinas consistently points out his methodological debt to Husserl, he also, from the very beginning of his own original philosophy, claims to go beyond the *magister*. (EI V, 1, 66) Levinas begins his own "system"<sup>9</sup> with a critique of the primacy of knowledge in the sense of representable truth, the realm of light, presence, ontology, etc. The *telos* of the epoche is no longer absolute knowledge. In Levinas' handling it is situated primarily within the realm of the ethical. If the goal of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is the totality of understanding, then it falls short of grasping the deeper, intersubjective dimensions of the epoche, and remains within the Cartesian formula. In the objectification of the object which is required for knowledge there is a collapse of the gap between me and what is not-me. Knowledge, therefore, is not a "being-with" as it purports. It is an *evasion*. The knowledge relation as the goal of the epoche, leaves the subject condemned to a Sartrean solitude where there is no exit toward the other, no transcendence, no possibility of genuine love, no relation. Levinas suspects from the very beginning that Husserl has not completely shaken off the shackles of intellectualism, his love affair with theory. And this does in fact seem to be the case in regard to Husserl's early work. But if there is any credence to our claim here that the epoche of *The Crisis* is substantially different than the Cartesian epoche, then we might begin to understand how it is that Levinas both praises and criticizes Husserl throughout his work. If the epoche of *The Crisis* is a fully intersubjective epoche, it is not yet the fully ethical epoche that it becomes in Levinas' philosophy.

In Levinas' view, we are separate beings who become existents over and against the anonymity of sheer existence, what Levinas designates the *Il y a*. But in this separateness and individuation from mere existence, this *Hypostasis* in regard to the *Il y a*, the existent finds itself,

qua separate, in solitude. The task of facing ourselves and taking up the work of becoming somebody, becoming a person, because it is difficult and requires effort, is evaded in two fundamental ways: enjoyment and knowledge. This twofold evasion is merely an evasion and not an escape because in enjoyment there is a collapse of the subject into the object. Hence the relation with the other which the solitary existent desires in order to overcome the solitude of being is lost in the relation of enjoyment. In knowledge, there is a collapse of the object into the subject, as was already pointed out. One hears the refrain of Hegel's master/slave dialectic here, and perhaps a solution. The otherness of the other, the basic prerequisite of solitude, must be maintained if there is to be relation. The relation with the other which maintains the integrity of solitude, Levinas calls Sociality.

It is not as if prior to the relation of sociality, there were two individuals who were not yet related but for whom there was a possibility of relation, as something extra added on to their solitary existence. It is sociality, in fact, which, in Levinas' analysis, first gives rise to subjectivity. In one sense, subjectivity means mastery over being, the accomplishment of Nietzsche's *Sovereign Individual*. But a more profound meaning is the capacity to be affected by, to be sensible and sensitive to, to be subjected by something, to respond. The subject emerges as subject in the form of response to the other, responsibility. Here the goal of the epoche, if one can still speak the language of teleology meaningfully in regard to the ethical epoche, is recognition of the incomprehensibility of the face of the Other. The Other is mystery, the irrecusable falling-away of the voluptuous, the perpetual seeking of the caress. Alterity, the otherness of the other, is exactly what escapes comprehension and representation, what escapes the light of knowledge.

This incomprehensibility which is the hallmark of alterity, its irreducibility to the sameness of knowledge, is what makes relation and intimacy both possible and impossible. Sociality is a being-with-the-other prior to there being any other to be with, properly speaking. The other which arises in thought is already derivative of a sociality that is a response to the Other, a response in which I am not only *with* the Other but *for* the Other as well, a responding which is what it means to be a subject. This understanding of subjectivity as responsibility is what Levinas means by the ethical, the accomplishment of the ethical epoche.

What Levinas has done is to follow out the intersubjective and ethical implications of the phenomenological reduction as this origi-

nated in and was developed by Husserl. In elaborating the continuity of development which the epoche undergoes within Husserl's own work and between Husserl and Levinas, we have tried to show how Husserl's influence remains lively in one area of contemporary philosophy; our intention has not been to make judgements about who is right and who is wrong. Even Levinas' critique of Husserl stands within the context of Husserl's call to risk starting over and beginning anew. If I have shown that neither the phenomenology of Husserl nor that of Levinas can be adequately understood apart from the profound place of the reduction and the whole question of methodology; if I have shown that Levinas takes up and continues the work started by Husserl, and that Levinas does this, consistently with his teacher, in an originaive manner; and if I have shown that there may have been a reciprocity between these two great seminal philosophers regarding the question of methodology, then what was intended to be accomplished in this limited allotment of time and space has been done.

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press), p. 28; hereafter, "EI."

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Walsh, "Husserl's *Epoche* as Method and Truth," *Auslegung* 14 (Summer 1988), pp. 211-223.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2 vols., trans. J. N. Findlay (Halle: 1900; New York: Humanities Press, 1970); hereafter, "LI."

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Vol. I, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (1913; New York: Collier Books, 1962); hereafter, "Ideas."

<sup>5</sup> E. Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Andre Orianne (Paris: Alcan, 1930; Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973); hereafter, "TI."

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970); hereafter, "Crisis."

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" in *Phenomenology and the Crises of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); hereafter "PRS."

<sup>8</sup> Levinas and a friend, Gabrielle Peiffer, translated this into French; published in 1931.

<sup>9</sup> I use this word advisedly in regard to Levinas. See Adriaan Peperzak, *System and History in Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986).