

**ETHICS AND ALTERITY:
MORAL CONSIDERABILITY AND THE OTHER**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Reneé for her boundless love and unyielding support throughout the process of its conception, development, and completion.

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Abstract

This study examines the problem of moral considerability and the Other and from two basic standpoints, namely, a phenomenological analysis of alterity and a hermeneutical-comparative encounter between the continental tradition and its "Other." This hermeneutical-comparative engagement places the phenomenological tradition (Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, de Beauvoir, Sartre, Buber, and Levinas) in dialogue with the East Asian tradition (Confucius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Kūkai, Dōgen, Nishida, Tanabe, Watsuji, and Nishitani) concerning the intersection of knowledge and "moral disclosure."

I argue that we confront the moral considerability of the Other horizontally, which is to say that the presence of knowing (relative alterity) shades into the irreducible difference of the situation occupied by the Other (absolute alterity). Sincere attempts to identify with the Other realize a morally transformative confrontation with absolute alterity ("alteration"), namely, the direct phenomenological experience of the Other's autonomy, which constitutes the concrete *sense* of the Other as morally considerable. Moral relationships with the Other, therefore, are defined as those modes of comportment that allow the Other to be disclosed *qua* absolute alterity and not merely in terms of relative alterity. For example, relationships of intimacy, solidarity, and compassion, optimally disclose and shelter the absolute alterity of the Other. Hence, "intimation," rather than intentionality, defines the proper mode of directedness by which the Other *qua* Other is disclosed.

The fundamental ethical question thus becomes the question of moral disclosure, i.e., the clarification of the domain of moral considerables, and, only secondarily, the question of "correct" moral action, i.e., the regulation of the domain of moral considerables. The project of ethics is thereby reconceived as an "inconceivable devotion" towards the Other, namely, a cultivated attention to alterity that situates us within a field of excessive moral obligation. In the end, an ethics of alterity requires an understanding of moral obligation as a commitment to a process of continually enacting new possibilities of intimacy, solidarity, and moral relation, which are rooted in the maturation of moral skill (involvement) rather than in the refinement of moral theory (contemplation).

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CHAPTER 1

Ethics and the Question of the Other

Few issues have expressed as powerful a hold over the thought of this century as that of "The Other." It is difficult to think of a second theme, even one that might be of more substantial significance, that has provoked as widespread an interest as this one; it is difficult to think of a second theme that so sharply marks off the present—admittedly a present growing out of the nineteenth century and reading back to it—from its historical roots in the tradition. To be sure, the problem of the other has at times been accorded a prominent place in ethics and anthropology, in legal and political philosophy. But the problem of the other has certainly never penetrated as deeply as today into the foundation of philosophical thought—the question of the other cannot be separated from the most primordial questions raised by modern thought.¹

1.1 The Other

The Other presents itself as both a problem and a question for philosophy. In epistemology, the Other reveals itself as a *problem*, most notably, the problem of other minds, and a rather abstract worry about solipsism. The appearance of the Other *qua* problem², however, reduces the Other to an uneasy *aporia* confronting the solid epistemic *ground* of the *cogito*. As a "problematic," the Other reveals a demand, but it is a demand imposed upon itself by philosophy, namely, a reminder and a remainder for its task—a task in which the face of the Other provokes an anxiety from within philosophy to rescue its own consistency and completeness.³ As such, philosophy does not find itself responsible

¹Michael Theunissen, *The Other*. Trans. Christopher Macann. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984, 1; hereafter indicated as "TO."

²A problem has definite boundary conditions that imply a clear sense of what constitutes a solution, and thereby a clear sense of what will make the problem disappear. The extreme moral danger implicit in this logic of approaching the Other *qua* problem can be seen in the efforts of the Nazi's "Final Solution" to what they perceived to be the "Jewish Problem." The identification of the Other as a problem is to initiate an "ef-facing," while understanding the Other as a question, a challenge to my spontaneity, is to allow the Other's presence to help determine me.

³By "completeness," I am referring to the internal demand of philosophy to predicate universally, that is, its insistence on sole sovereignty over that domain of discourse with the widest scope of

to the Other, but only to its own ground, the logic of identity. Consequently, the Other remains circumscribed within the negative, a pathology threatening the integrity of philosophy's theoretical authority and scope.

However, for ethics, the Other appears as a *question* of practical action. Indeed, the appearance of the Other *qua* question is the event of being put into question. It is the question of the Other, that is, the question belonging to and originating from the Other. It is what Emmanuel Levinas refers as the "critical presence of the Other," a presence that "will call into question this egoism."⁴ As such, the Other marks a radical dissolution of anonymity by asking for accountability, inviting a response, and calling us to responsibility. Here, the Other presents an external demand, a claim made on philosophy for the sake of the Other, an insistence that philosophy yield to the integrity of the Other.

The Other, then, is a contested site, a source of tension between philosophy's epistemological and ethical commitments. Whereas epistemology struggles to comprehend, to absorb, to assimilate the Other as productive of a greater totality, ethics seeks to care about the Other. Thus, while the question of the Other has become increasingly pressing within contemporary philosophical discussions, the systematic priority given to epistemology continues to undermine the very possibility of genuinely reckoning with alterity.

generality. At least traditionally, philosophy has reserved the right to utter sentences of the form $\forall x$ without qualification or apology.

⁴Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969, 119/123; hereafter indicated as "TI" followed by the page number for the English translation and the corresponding reference to the French edition: Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*. Paris: Kluwer Academic, 1971.

1.1.1 Moral Considerability and Recognition of the Other

Ethics as it has been conceived in the West has concerned itself with *how* to mediate interactions within the boundary of considerables, but has failed to consider the more primordial ethical question regarding the limits of the boundary itself, which is to say the question of *who* matters and *who* does not.

But with an increasing interest in the politics of difference on the one hand, and the acuteness with which phenomenology has pursued the theme of alterity on the other, the question of moral considerability has gained something of a voice. In *Home and Beyond*, Anthony Steinbock sketches some of the political, historical, cultural, ecological, social, and theoretical stakes implicated in these contemporary concerns about alterity and difference:

When we pose such questions, we are also inquiring into sharply contended political and historical issues: What is the sense of ethnic wars and attempts at so-called ethnic purification? How are human beings to act responsibly in relation to other species and toward the Earth? When individuals or groups are identified as "different," say, women, who is claiming the voice of "the same"? Does asserting one's national identity of necessity result in crimes of hate, neo-Nazism, or totalitarianism? Is the ability to make cross-cultural and cross-historical critiques precluded by the recognition of difference?⁵

In general, there exists a basic incoherence in contemporary discourse regarding the precise relation between moral considerability and the Other. On the one hand, it is argued that the Other is excluded from moral considerability on the basis of difference, which is to say that moral considerability is predicated on the recognition of sameness. While, at the same time, it is argued that moral considerability entails the recognition of difference, which is to say that failure to appreciate difference constitutes a form of

⁵Anthony J. Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995, 1; hereafter indicated as "HB."

violence. In *Situating the Self*, Seyla Benhabib distinguishes between the generalized and the concrete Other, a distinction that goes a long way towards resolving this incoherence.

According to Benhabib, the concept of the “generalized other” is rooted in presuppositions of sameness, which form the ontological, political, and legal basis for “norms of *formal equality and reciprocity*.”⁶ In contrast, the concept of the “concrete other” involves a bracketing of commonality in order to appreciate the “concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution,” which forms the basis for “norms of *equity and complementary reciprocity*” (SS 159). On Benhabib’s view, there are two notions of the Other corresponding to two distinct moral domains, namely, the generalized Other of the public domain and the concrete Other of the private domain, which, in turn, has corresponded to distinct styles of moral consideration: justice and care.

1.1.2 Metaphysical Descriptions and Moral Considerability

In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor distinguishes between moral sentiment, as a basic human propensity, and those metaphysical descriptions circumscribing who, or what, is a proper object of ethical consideration: “There seems to be a natural, inborn compunction to inflict death or injury on another, an inclination to come to the help of the injured or endangered. Culture and upbringing may help to define the boundaries of the relevant ‘others,’ but they don’t seem to create the basic reaction itself.”⁷ For Taylor, the question of the Other is a meta-ethical question regarding the fundamental descriptions regulating moral considerability. Thus, a central project of this study will involve clarifying the relations between such metaphysical descriptions, moral considerability, and the

⁶ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1992, 159; hereafter indicated to as “SS.”

⁷ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, 5; hereafter indicated as “SoS.”

experience of alterity. More specifically, explicating how the alterity of the concrete Other at the level of individual moral relationships provides the experiential-existential ground for institutional consideration of the generalized Other.

1.1.3 Expanding Considerations

Throughout history, we have witnessed a gradual extension of moral concern from landowners to citizens, from citizens to slaves, from men to women, from adults to children, from human beings to animals, and so on. Indeed, in one sense, history documents a continual struggle by the Other to be recognized as worthy of ethical concern. From a contemporary perspective, the emergence of critical discourses like feminism, queer theory, post-colonial analyses, animal rights debates, and ecological movements are the latest “frontlines” in efforts to erode the hegemony of those received narratives restricting moral consideration. In other words, these critical discourses represent an important effort at expanding the very boundaries of moral significance. They have worked to deconstruct the gate-keeping metaphysical descriptions restricting the scope of the domain of moral considerables. Such discourses have thereby acted as advocates for the Other.⁸ However, these critical discourses have addressed the question of alterity from a thoroughly ontic and therefore piecemeal perspective, rather than getting to the ontological source of alterity as a phenomenological-existential structure. On my view, it is necessary to penetrate the ontological dimension of alterity in order to explicate its relation to moral considerability at a deeper level. I believe that this shift in analytical level marks a transition from politics to philosophy.

⁸ Although many of these critical discourses have been put forward by those that could be considered as marginal, e.g., homosexual and lesbian intellectuals within queer theory, but inasmuch as they have actually had a voice, i.e., as highly educated intellectuals occupying academic positions, they have functioned as advocates for the Other.

1.2 Ethics and Epistemology

As I have already hinted, one of the central contentions of this study concerns a fundamental tension between ethics understood as safeguarding alterity and epistemology understood as the overcoming of alterity—a tension that has remained suppressed by the priority given to epistemology as grounding ethics.⁹ From its very inception, philosophy has identified the True and the Good. For example, the famous Socratic dictum: “To know the good is to do the good.” And yet, the simplicity of this identification masks a deeper asymmetry between the two terms. While the common interpretation takes this Socratic claim to be asserting the straightforward identity of the true and the good, its logical structure asserts only a conditional relation. That is, “if one knows the good, then one does the good,” but *not* the converse. In other words, the real thrust of this shibboleth is that knowledge (truth) founds goodness (action), without the symmetrical claim that moral comportment founds truth.

The Socratic focus on definition is a consequence of this foundational role of epistemology, since establishing determinate boundaries (knowledge) occupies the central role in stabilizing one’s connection with the “good life.”¹⁰ Epistemology then functions as

⁹ Buddhist “epistemology” stands as an interesting alternative to conventional Western models of epistemology. For the Buddhists, epistemology is not bound by the Law of Exclusive Middle, which enforces an absolute gulf between “Truth” and “Falsity” (predicated on the absolute separation of Being and Non-Being). Rather, according to the Buddhists, it is not a binary matter of truth and falsity, but of truth (*sacca*), falsity (*kali*), and confusion (*musâ*), as well as further related differentiations: the useful (*atthasamhita*), the non-useful (*anatthasamhita*), the pleasant (*piya*) and the unpleasant (*appiya*). Thus, for the Buddhists, the status of propositions occupy a place within 3-dimensional matrix of truth-value, utility and emotive content—see David Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1992, 45-52. This Buddhist model of truth helps mitigate the problem of conflict by providing for a more complex logical map for how different truths stand vis-à-vis one another.

¹⁰ This theoretical relation to praxis is challenged by Daoist and Buddhist perspectives, which see the deepest stability of the good in “naturalness,” a form of embodied moral skill, and not in theory. For an excellent discussion of moral skill and its centrality within such alternative moral approaches, see Francisco J. Varela, *Ethical Know-How. Action, Wisdom, and Cognition*. Trans.

a ground by generating *closure* in two distinct senses: closure as enclosure (defined limits), and closure as certainty (end of inquiry). Indeed, I suggest that “Socratic irony” can often be located in the instances of friction between affirming the former sense of closure while denying the latter. On the one hand, the Socratic method aims at securing definitional closure in order to provide the epistemological grounds for acting according to the good, while on the other, the Socratic conception of the good life as the “examined” life entails resisting the closing of inquiry.

A second decisive identification that has structured modern Western consciousness concerns the equating of knowledge with power. This identification, wherein the possibility of *intervention* becomes the hallmark of truth, has played a seminal role in defining what counts as significant knowledge, and consequently what counts as a worthwhile intellectual pursuit. For the time being, I simply want to offer a provocative juxtaposition between this Western Enlightenment equation of knowledge and power with the identification of wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*) and compassion (Skt. *karunā*) in Buddhist enlightenment. Although I will return to consider this juxtaposition at more length, it is worth introducing here because it puts into sharper relief the deep dissonance between the two projects of Western epistemology: epistemology as supporting ethics and epistemology as securing control. Moreover, this juxtaposition suggests a crucial qualitative difference between knowledge and wisdom, a difference that is essential to any coherent account of our moral comportment towards alterity.

While one may object that the priority given to epistemology over ethics is purely *operational*, namely, that action follows from knowledge, rather than *valuational*, which is

to say that knowledge is more important than the good.¹¹ The contemporary anxiety concerning alterity and difference is symptomatic of the privileged place afforded knowledge over moral response. The question of alterity provides an extraordinary vantage point for illuminating this fundamental discord. Richard J. Bernstein offers an eloquent articulation of the fundamental post-modern theme regarding the antagonism existing between epistemology as comprehension and control and ethics as sheltering alterity:

This is the theme that *resists* the unrelenting tendency of the will to knowledge and truth, where Reason—when unmasked—is understood as always seeking to appropriate, comprehend, control, master, contain, dominate, suppress, or repress what presents itself as “the Other” it confronts. It is the theme of the violence of Reason’s imperialistic welcoming embrace.

The metaphors of “imperialism,” “colonialization,” “domination,” “mastery,” and “control” are not to be taken as “dead” metaphors. For the “logic” at work here *is* the “logic” at work in cultural, political, social, and economic imperialism and colonialization—even the “logic” of ethical imperialism, where the language of reciprocal recognition and reconciliation masks the violent reduction of the alterity of “the Other”(Autrui) to “more of the same.”¹²

Ironically, Bernstein’s point about the constant insinuation of the will to truth as undermining our ethical relation vis-à-vis alterity is underscored by a problematic claim he makes only a few pages later: “This irreducible alterity does not mean that there is nothing in common between the I and its genuine ‘Other.’ If there were nothing in common, we

¹¹ Again, the Buddhists provide a helpful alternative to the traditional Western conception. The notion of *karma* prevents understanding the relation between epistemology and ethics as a unidirectional relation between a foundation and the founded. On the Buddhist view, ethics and epistemology are co-founding. The doctrine of *karma* teaches any set of facts embedded in a history of choices and values that has helped constitute the facts as they stand. This is why the Buddhist “Eightfold Path” involves a mutual cultivation of ethical-epistemological standpoints. The notion of “Right View” means holding correct moral and correct epistemological views on the world. Even the Buddhist distinction between moral actions as being either “skillful” or “unskilled” embodies a practical intertwining of moral and epistemological appraisals of a situation.

¹² Richard J. Bernstein, “Incommensurability and Otherness Revisited” in Eliot Deutsch, ed. *Culture and Modernity*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, 97; hereafter indicated as “CMod.”

would once again find ourselves in the *aporias* of self-defeating relativism and/or perspectivism" (CMod. 99). I am sympathetic with Bernstein's claim that *irreducible* alterity does not entail the complete absence of shared relations, but only that the Other and I cannot be rendered commensurable. As Rorty so succinctly puts it, "Incommensurability entails irreducibility but not incompatibility."¹³ Rather, my point of contention is with the irrelevance of Bernstein's epistemological justification. While the fact that the Other and I share something in common may provide a sufficient counter-example to show that more strident forms of relativism and perspectivism are not true, there is no reversal of entailment. Our distaste for particular epistemological positions tells us something about our preferences, but it does not tell us anything about actual relations in the world. This particular slip, once again, is instructive, because it reveals how easily epistemological interests seize precedence over considerations of alterity.

1.2.1 The Will to Truth

I shall be using the Nietzschean notions of the "will to truth" or the "will to knowledge" in order to designate the basic epistemological drive to discipline alterity and appropriate the Other.¹⁴ The will to truth, therefore, is not only a function of individual psychology, but also a *systemic* feature of social practices, institutional structures, and, most essentially, a defining feature of specific modes of thought, which are constitutionally allergic to alterity e.g., "herd morality" in Nietzsche and "calculative thinking" in

¹³ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, 388; hereafter indicated as "PMN."

¹⁴ To fully explicate the subtle differences in Nietzsche's use of will, drive, force, desire, etc., in relation to the concepts of truth, knowing, wisdom, etc., would require a systematic treatment of the Nietzsche corpus, which simply reaches beyond the scope of this work. Thus, while it may be possible to differentiate the "will to knowledge" from the "will to truth," I will be using the terms synonymously, because nothing of significance turns on their distinction within the context of this study.

Heidegger. Despite the fact that Nietzsche tackles the problem of the will to truth in a variety of contexts, it is possible to distill two thematic lines pertinent to the concerns of this study: the will to truth as the demand to justify existence and the will to truth as the demand for truthfulness.

In the first line of thought, the will to truth is, at bottom, the drive for a ground (*Grund*), that is, for a stable basis of truth. Paradoxically, however, the trajectory of this drive continually forces a confrontation with the abyss (*Abgrund*) of existence. Thus, this desire that seeks a ground from which to justify existence cannot escape the fact that existence itself provides the existential ground for justification and the practice of reason-giving.¹⁵ Moreover, the violent honesty of its pursuit successively unmask the myths (untruths) that have formed the requisite ambiance for living, and thereby threatens the will to life with nihilism.¹⁶ Nevertheless, for Nietzsche, the will to truth, exposed as the will to nihilism, presents humanity with something of a pregnant dilemma: it either provokes more robust

¹⁵ In the essay, "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche points to a fundamental agon between the drive for life and the drive to truth, which he frames in terms of justification: "the discord between the desire for freedom, beauty, abundance of life on the one hand and on the other the drive to truth, which asks only: what is existence worth as such?" from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 145; hereafter indicated as "UM."

¹⁶ According to Nishitani, aphorism 344 of *The Gay Science*: "Will to truth, that may perhaps be a concealed will to death," points to the "latent nihilism" implicit in the phenomena of the "will to truth" Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. Trans. Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990, 87; hereafter indicated as "SoN." From the very beginning of Nietzsche's work, one can locate a profound mistrust vis-à-vis various manifestations of the will to truth. Most notably, Nietzsche's critiques of Socratism in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "Wherever Socratism turns its searching eyes it sees lack of insight and the power of illusion; and from this lack it infers the essential perversity and reprehensibility of what exists," *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, §13. Indeed, Nietzsche is led, in "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," to pose the questions: "Is life to dominate knowledge and science, or is knowledge to dominate life? Which of these two forces is the higher and more decisive?" (UM 121). Nietzsche compares the demythologization of the will to truth, masked as an "unrestrained" and "excessive" historical sense to an *uprooting* or a *severing of roots*: "it uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs the things that exists of the atmosphere in which alone they can live" (UM 95), and "it can cut off the strongest instincts of youth, its fire, defiance, unselfishness and love at the roots" (UM 115).

wills to life to reckon with the groundlessness of existence or explodes weaker wills in a vacuum of values.

The second related line of thought concerns the relation between *ressentiment* and its reactive posture towards Otherness. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche presents the will to know as a reactive drive rooted in the herd's primordial fear of the alien and the need to reduce the foreign (the Other) to the familiar (the Same): "Something strange is to be reduced to something *familiar* [*etwas Bekanntes*]. [...] Look, isn't our need for knowledge precisely this need for the familiar, the will to uncover under everything strange, unusual, and questionable something that no longer disturbs us? Is it not the *instinct of fear* that bids us to know?"¹⁷ In his book *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter highlights this linkage between the will to truth and the herd's intolerance for alterity: "Suspicion of otherness, which Nietzsche detected at the very root of pity, is now supposed to provide the basis for the demand for truthfulness. For only when others express themselves as they think and feel can those dangers be countered."¹⁸ In his analysis of the relation between the "will to power" and the "will to truth," Müller-Lauter points to the morality of *ressentiment* at the base of the will to truth. The moral virtue of truthfulness (transparency) as the highest value of the herd is, in reality, a means for masking a deep-seated fear of otherness.

In a similar vein, Nishitani argues in *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* that "the morality of the 'will to truth,'" as concealed nihilism, elevates the "self-evident" value of truth above

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, §355; hereafter indicated as "GS."

¹⁸ Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche. His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*. Trans. David J. Parent. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999, 58; hereafter indicated as "NPC." Similarly, he notes: "Herd-morality generates distrust of every kind of non-correspondence with it. Mistrust gives rise to the demand for truthfulness. This is the means to discover otherness in order to combat it effectively" (NPC 69).

the value of life itself, which requires an affirmation of the alterity (non-transparency) of the self and of existence as such (SoN 96). In addition, by characterizing the will to truth as a desire for *determinateness*, "a 'will to truth' appears which seeks determinateness" (SoN 47), Nishitani provides a bridge across the two lines of thought. By understanding the will to truth in terms of a will for determinateness, the desire for an absolute ground and the fear of alterity can be interpreted as two avenues of resistance manifested by the Apollonian will to determinateness against the Dionysian affirmation of becoming.

In the second volume of his *Nietzsche* work, Heidegger gives an account of Nietzsche's will to truth that alludes to its implication in technological (calculative) thinking: "Truth is what man strives for, it is that of which he demands that it dominate all action and letting be, all wishing and giving, experiencing and shaping, suffering and overcoming. One speaks of a 'will to truth.'"¹⁹ The danger of the will to truth is rather clear for Heidegger. It dominates "letting be," and therefore covers over the possibility of more meditative modes of thinking, i.e., *Gelassenheit*.

I will conclude this section by invoking a third figure, arguably, the most significant heir to the Nietzschean and Heideggerean confrontations with the will to truth, namely, Michel Foucault. In his essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault connects the intrinsic violence of the will to truth to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge:

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*. Vols. 3&4. Ed. David Farrell Krell. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, & Frank A. Capuzzi. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991, 24.

if it examines itself and if, more generally, it interrogates the various forms of scientific consciousness in its history, it finds that *all these forms and transformations are aspects of the will to knowledge*: instinct, passion, the inquisitor's devotion, cruel subtlety, and malice. It discovers the violence of a position that sides against those who are happy in their ignorance, against the effective illusions by which humanity protects itself [emphasis mine]²⁰

In addition, Foucault argues that Nietzsche's later insights into the will to truth, namely, that the "desire for knowledge has been transformed among us into a passion which fears no sacrifice,"²¹ are, at bottom, a reconsideration of earlier insights presented in the *Untimely Meditations* regarding critical history's work of "detaching us from every real source and for sacrificing the very movement of life to the exclusive concern for truth" (LCP 164). According to Foucault, Nietzsche's genealogical analyses detail, via the emergence of the will to knowledge, the transformation of the pragmatic function of truth as a *means* for realizing life-affirming values into *the end* that life serves. Thus, the will to truth as the supreme value demands sacrifice at each step of its realization. Following Nietzsche, Foucault links this sacrificial demand to the fundamental injustice attending the practical deployment of the will to knowledge:

²⁰Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, 162; hereafter indicated as "LCP."

²¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, §429

The historical analysis of this rancorous will to knowledge [*vouloir-savoir*]²² reveals that all knowledge rests upon injustice (that there is no right, not even in the act of knowing, to truth or a foundation for truth) and that the instinct for knowledge is malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind) [...] Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. Where religion once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge (LCP 163).

1.3 Methodological Reflections

The following discussions regarding methodology serve two distinct, but related, purposes. Firstly, they are explanatory in that they offer additional clarification of my specific approach to the subject matter. Secondly, they are justificatory in that they supply the general philosophical orientation of the project. By making explicit the methodological commitments informing this study, I hope to situate my position within an increasingly vast philosophical terrain, and thereby make most of its basic presuppositions evident. Thus, such methodological reflections should not only clarify *how* I shall proceed, but should also indicate *whence* I come.

²² In his translation of "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Donald F. Bouchard notes that the French phrase "*Vouloir-savoir*" means "both the will to knowledge and knowledge as revenge" (LCP 163). Also, see Foucault's course summary for "The Will to Knowledge," his inaugural course at the Collège de France, in Michel Foucault, *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Trans. Robert Hurley et al. New York: The New Press, 1997, 11-16; hereafter indicated as "EST." In this course, Foucault takes up the "morphology of the will to knowledge" in order to distinguish between knowledge (*savoir*) and learning (*connaissance*), the will to knowledge (*savoir*) and the will to truth (*vérité*), particularly as it pertains to the "theoretical models" presented in Aristotle and Nietzsche. However, according to Paul Rabinow's introduction, "The interpretation Foucault gives of both thinkers [Aristotle and Nietzsche] at this moment, because it provides such an absolute contrast, does not allow for a fruitful distinction between the will to knowledge and the will to truth. He seems to affirm their functional identity in Western history, a distinction without a difference" (EST xiv).

1.3.1 Value, Facts, and Qualities

A basic presupposition of this project is a straightforward realism concerning quality and experience, or an unrepentant rejection of the fact-value dichotomy. Quite simply, I agree with John Dewey when he claims "[t]hat esthetic and moral experience reveal traits of real things as truly as does intellectual experience."²³ And elsewhere, when Dewey broadens the very concept of the aesthetic in order to describe the immanent quality of experience:

Empirically, things are poignant, tragic, beautiful, humorous, settled, disturbed, comfortable, annoying, barren, harsh, consoling, splendid, fearful; are such immediately and in their own right and behalf. "If we take advantage of the word esthetic in a wider sense than that of application to the beautiful and ugly, esthetic quality, immediate final or self-enclosed, indubitably characterizes natural situations as they empirically occur" (*EN* 82).

In the wake of classical pragmatism, post-Heideggerean phenomenology, and even some of the more pragmatically oriented analytic philosophers like W. V. O. Quine and Nelson Goodman, it is difficult to understand how the fact-value dualism maintains its currency.²⁴ And yet, it continues to resurface within meta-ethical discussions in the form of the is-ought debate. While entering into this debate would take the present discussion too far afield, let me offer a simple but wonderfully rich statement from Nishitani that not only resolves the perceived ontological fissure of the is-ought dualism, but resolves it by appealing to our relatedness to the Other: "the nature of the task of the *ought* is the other-

²³ John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co, 1925, 20; hereafter indicated as "EN."

²⁴ Again, the Buddhism notion of *karma* provides a non-Western standpoint firmly denying the separation of fact and value.

directedness of the *is*" (RN 260).²⁵ On Nishitani's view, the ought is a quality of the self's essential relatedness to the Other. In Chapter 4, I will revisit this statement by Nishitani in order to unpack his conception of "other-directedness" in relation to normativity.

1.3.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology does not describe a univocal method, since one can speak meaningfully of static, genetic, generative, eidetic, existential, hermeneutic, transcendental, mundane, psychological, mantic, and deconstructive phenomenology. Phenomenology refers to a general methodological orientation, rather than a method.²⁶ The essence of this orientation is captured by Husserl's oft-cited slogan: "to the things themselves (*zu den Sachen selbst*)."²⁷ Phenomenology describes a commitment to philosophical understanding as mediated by a critical return to a primordial experience of the subject matter (*die Sache*) rather than to the authority of received discourses or abstract logical analyses that have lost touch with concrete reality. In *The History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger explains phenomenology's orientation in precisely these terms: "The phenomenological maxim 'to the matters themselves' is addressed against constructions and free-floating questions in traditional concepts which have become more and more groundless."²⁷ Similarly, in *Being and Time*: "It [phenomenology] is opposed to all free-

²⁵ Nishitani, Keiji, *Religion and Nothingness*. Trans. Jan Van-Bragt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, 260; hereafter indicated as "RN." The Japanese edition is Nishitani, Keiji, *宗教とは何か*. Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1961.

²⁶ "It [phenomenology] is a way of proceeding that they [phenomenologists] have in common. They agree on approaching questions in a certain way, rather than on adhering to a certain number of fixed propositions" from Emmanuel Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen & Michael B. Smith. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998, 91; hereafter indicated as "DEH."

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*. Trans. Theodore Kisiel. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985, §8; hereafter indicated as "HCT."

floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated."²⁸

Beyond Husserl, however, this attention to *die Sache* as the only legitimate source of truth can be traced directly to Hegel. In his "Preface" to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues vehemently against philosophical tendencies to evade "the real issue [*die Sache selbst*] [...] instead of tarrying with it, and losing itself in it, this kind of knowing is forever grasping at something new; it remains essentially preoccupied with itself instead of being preoccupied with the real issue and surrendering to it" (*PhS* §3).

On Heidegger's view, however, the roots of phenomenology extend beyond Hegel, to the origin of philosophy in classical Greece, most notably, to Aristotle and his focus on the relation between being and *logos*. Aristotle holds that "All human beings by nature desire to know [tr. mod.]," and he links this primal desire to the adoration of the senses, and, in particular, to seeing, because "most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things."²⁹ Through our senses, that is our interaction with the phenomena that constitute our environment, we are *made* to know; in other words, the knowledge that arises from our senses is a knowledge that does not emerge voluntarily, but impinges upon us. Furthermore, this initiation of knowing issues from a direct intuition of difference. Coming to know entails bringing the differences between things to the fore, such that this perceptual knowledge, or what Heidegger takes to be a proto-phenomenology, originates in and through difference.

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962, §7/28; hereafter indicated as "BT" followed by the section number and the page number to the German edition: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001.

²⁹ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Vol. 2. Revised Oxford Translation. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, *Metaphysics* 980a26.

Conversely, knowledge as a function of the Same is constructed on the basis of *memory* as experience. For Aristotle, knowledge begins with perception, moving from memory to experience to *technê*, and finally towards *epistêmê*. This movement coincides with a transition from knowledge of particulars (difference) to knowledge of universals (sameness), which parallels a shift from the direct awareness of *that* a thing is, namely, its being, to explanatory principles clarifying *why* a thing is. Thus, knowledge entails a transcendence of the phenomenon in order to grasp the generality of its cause, thereby effacing the particularity of the phenomenon and reducing difference to sameness. The “authoritative knowledge of particulars” (*Meta.* 981b11) is overwritten by the sedimentation of memory-experience and the construction of a system of knowledge. Aristotle’s account of the genesis of knowledge from pre-metaphysical experience, the explication of phenomena (phenomenology), and of the transition to metaphysical knowledge, the universal principles existing behind the differences of phenomena, reveals two things (epistemology). Firstly, it suggests why the early Heidegger believes that phenomenology offers an alternative to metaphysics, and secondly, how a commitment to phenomenology and difference (the Other) contests the supremacy of epistemology and the universal (the Same).

It is precisely phenomenology’s commitment to the primacy of *die Sache*, which accounts for the variety within phenomenological method. Anthony Steinbock’s distinction between *progressive* and *regressive* methods is helpful for reading the development of phenomenology as an honouring of this basic commitment. The notion of a progressive method, which describes Husserl’s early formulations of phenomenology as static and foundational, refers to a unilateral movement from method to subject matter—a progression that is essentially antithetical to the original motivations of phenomenology. In

contrast, regressive phenomenology begins with the subject matter, whose mode of givenness provides a "leading-clue" (*Leitfaden*) for determining an appropriate methodology for explicating the phenomenon.³⁰

On the one hand, phenomenology begins as a philosophical program defined by its surrender to the Other (*die Sache*), while at the same time, many of its formal notions (e.g., intentionality, constitution, reduction, etc.) occupy at best a conflicted stance vis-à-vis alterity. And yet, the history and development of phenomenology is defined by an ongoing preoccupation with the question of the Other, because it has been the question of the Other that has put phenomenology itself in question. Consequently, phenomenology has come to inhabit this tension, and within this insecurity realized a most profound relationship vis-à-vis the Other. For this reason, I contend that the question of the Other must be responded to on phenomenological grounds, and so the third chapter of this study confronts several of the definitive phenomenological encounters with alterity. By rehearsing these encounters, it is possible to trace the systematic development of phenomenology, and thereby gain a clearer picture of the methodological theses undermining such encounters. Secondly, it is possible to track the growing urgency and concentration with which the Other presses, and thereby to secure a more concrete starting-point for this investigation.

In order to provide a point of reference for my approach, there are five key theses that differentiate my conception of phenomenological method from the classical Husserlian transcendental phenomenology of the *Cartesian Meditations*:

³⁰ See Steinbock's *Home and Beyond*, for an excellent discussion of some of the key structural advances in Husserl's phenomenology.

1) I reject any methodological theses supporting a Cartesian model of the subject in which the subject one-sidedly finds or constitutes the world as object. Such a metaphysics of the subject as a *simply-located, self-contained, and self-transparent interiority* fundamentally misconstrues the concreteness of our embodied existence as physically, linguistically, practically, socially, culturally, spatially, and temporally *extended out into the world*. Moreover, as a basic phenomenological presupposition, such models of the subject generate false problems with respect to understanding, language, practices, embodiment, and intersubjectivity, which are simply intractable.

2) In order to preserve the concreteness of the embodied and situated subject, and to avoid any naïve pretense of “bracketing” or “reducing” the world, I adopt a regressive phenomenological procedure that takes *pregivenness (Vorgegebenheit)* (Husserl), or our *preontological (vorontologisch)* (Heidegger) and *pre-objective understanding (préobjective)* (Merleau-Ponty) of the world, as leading-clues for initiating phenomenological reflection. Again, as Steinbock explains:

The process of questioning back displaces the emphasis in phenomenology from an inquiry into *modes of givenness*, which assumes that there can be a simple starting point, into *modes of pre-givenness*. The use of the expression “*pregivenness*,” especially in relation to the notion of *lifeworld*, is significant because it reflects an awareness, implicit or explicit, that the world is always already there, meaningfully, when we reflectively or intuitively turn toward it (HB 83).

3) A consequence of adopting a regressive procedure is that phenomenological description becomes inextricable from hermeneutics: the explication, deconstruction, and clarification of the presuppositions structuring the natural attitude. Rather than being a source of naïveté, the natural attitude provides a point of entry into the meaningfulness that is always already ahead of us. Hence, as Heidegger tells us in *Being and Time*: “the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in

interpretation [Auslegung]" (BT, §7C). In his essay, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," Ricoeur argues for the "mutual belonging" of hermeneutics and phenomenology.³¹ According to Ricoeur, since hermeneutics focuses on "meaning," in the dual sense of "having significance" and "intentionality," phenomenology "remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics" (HHS 101). And reciprocally, "[t]he hermeneutical condition of phenomenology is linked to the role of *Auslegung* [explication] in the fulfillment of its philosophical project" (HHS 101).

4) The introduction of hermeneutics into phenomenology heightens the importance of *context*—practices, language, history, sociality—as non-thematic horizons structuring the meaning of phenomena.

5) From the standpoint of moral concern for alterity, a regressive procedure offers a less invasive and violent method for attending to phenomena. Rather than setting upon entities with *the same* ready-made technique, a regressive procedure allows entities to "show themselves with the kind of access which genuinely belongs to them" (BT §7C). Since a regressive procedure takes its interpretive cue from the Other, rather than addressing phenomena from an identical methodological point of departure, and because it leaves open the possibility of genuine surprise and revision through multifaceted and polyvalent appearances of phenomena, a regressive procedure permits a more critical vantage point.

1.3.3 Comparative Methodology and Philosophical Hermeneutics

The question of the Other has been an enduring preoccupation of European philosophical consciousness, which, in many ways, is emblematic of our very transition

³¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Ed. and Trans. Richard B. Thompson. Cambridge University Press, 1981, 101; hereafter indicated as "HHS."

into modernity. However, despite the long-standing history of this question, even the most radical discourses concerning alterity have remained inappropriately Eurocentric.³² Thus, by stepping beyond the limits of the European tradition in order to both enact and theorize an engagement with the radical alterity of East Asian philosophy as “our” philosophical Other, this study stands out as unique and sadly overdue. Consequently, while the “question of the Other” refers to the philosophical focus of this study and hermeneutic phenomenology its unifying methodology, it is comparative philosophy that provides the concrete context of engagement.

Comparative philosophy marks a genuine frontline with regard to concrete efforts to confront “deep” alterity. As early as 1932, I. A. Richards recognizes the practical and theoretical problems inherent in the comparative enterprise:

Can we in attempting to understand and translate a work which belongs to a very different tradition from our own do more than read our own conceptions into it? [...] To put it more precisely, can we maintain two systems of thinking in our minds without reciprocal infection and yet some way mediate between them?³³

In an even more anxious tone, Richards entertains the daunting possibility of facing communicative practices, in this case classical Chinese, which are not merely dissimilar, but of a wholly different order: “The problem seems to grow still more formidable as we realize that it concerns not only incommensurable concepts but also comparisons between

³² One possible exception might be Heidegger’s encounters with Chinese philosophy via his aborted translation of the *Daodejing* with Prof. Paul Shi-yi Xiao and with Japanese philosophy via his personal relationships with Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi, Nishitani Keiji, and Kuki Shūzō, and his acquaintance with Zen Buddhism via D.T. Suzuki’s work. While *A Dialogue on Language* provides the semblance of a cross-cultural discourse on the possibility of a genuine European-Asian encounter across “houses of being,” it is, at bottom, Heidegger’s dramatization of his 1954 meeting with Tezuka Tomio. Thus, what at first appears to be an authentic dialogue is, in actuality, a monological act of European ventriloquism. Reinhard May’s book, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*. Trans. Graham Parkes. London: Routledge, 1996, provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of Heidegger’s complex relationship with Asian thought.

³³ I. A. Richards, *Mencius on the Mind*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932, 86-87; hereafter indicated as “MM.”

concepts and items which may not be concepts at all" (MM 87). Since our linguistic practices and our thinking are so intimately connected, the question must be raised as to the possibility of truly understanding the thought belonging to a disparate linguistic tradition. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche, as both philologist and philosopher, makes this point regarding the relationship between basic grammar and philosophical systems:

The strange family resemblances of Indian, Greek, and German philosophizing is explained easily enough. Where there is affinity of languages, it cannot fail, owing to the common philosophical grammar—mean, owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions—that everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems; just as the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation. It is highly probable that philosophers within the domain of Ural-Altai languages (where the concept of the subject is least developed) look otherwise "into the world," and will be found on paths of thought different from those of the Indo-Germanic peoples and the Muslims...³⁴

The real force of Nietzsche's point for comparative philosophy lies in the possibility that our primary linguistic habits instinctively structure our thinking. The obvious implications are even more devastating, because they problematize the possibility of critically reflecting on the sway of this basic grammar, if it is at the same time the very condition for thoughtful reflection.

However, while these concerns are precisely the concerns comparative philosophers need to consider, they do not provide sufficient grounds for abandoning comparative projects. Firstly, we cannot desert projects directed towards meaningful encounter because its alternative—disregard and quarantine—do a greater violence to the Other than a failure in understanding. With respect to this possibility, Bernstein rightly cautions, "We can never escape the real practical possibility that we will fail to do justice to the alterity of

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966, §20; hereafter indicated as "BGE".

'the Other.'" [...] But the response to the threat of this practical failure should be an ethical one" (CM 99-100). Indeed, if, as I will contend, alterity emerges as a quality of *interaction*, then our concern about safeguarding difference must translate into concrete dealings with the Other. And, by extension, if moral considerability involves a recognition of alterity, then failing to engage the Other ensures that she remains beyond our ethical purview. It would place the Other outside of ethics.

Secondly, while a resolute interest in the truth is always a guiding matter for the philosopher, its guidance should be primarily directed towards mediating our thoughtful relation with the Other, and not solely towards the acquisition of truth. In other words, while misunderstanding should always be recognized as "real practical possibility" in comparative philosophy, our encounter with the Other should not be aborted because of the possibility of error, nor should the measure of success of such an encounter be reduced to "correct" comprehension. The appropriation of truth does not provide an adequate gauge for success, since the truth can, and often is, violently wrenched from the Other. Our history is replete with examples in which the Other has been sacrificed for the sake of acquiring her truth.³⁵ Indeed, torture and interrogation are the quintessential instances in which the will to truth realizes the complete erasure of ethics. Consequently, the struggle to understand the Other, that is, "to get it right," can effectively contribute to the quality of the encounter and invite the emergence of the alterity of the Other, *if and only if* our meeting with the Other is first and foremost a welcoming and only secondarily a questioning.

³⁵ Throughout I will alternate between the feminine and masculine pronouns in order to avoid reifying the gender of the Other.

This leads to a third point, which is a Gadamerian lesson. That is, it is not enough to ~~simply know~~ the truths of the Other, correct or otherwise, because genuine understanding requires that we are open to the Other in her alterity. This openness entails taking her claims to truth seriously by putting our own horizon at risk. It is to suspend the appropriative economy of the Same:

In human relations the important thing is, as we have seen, to experience the Thou truly as a Thou—i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. [...] Openness to the other, involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so (*TM* 361).

Here, Gadamer underscores the fundamental dependency of understanding on respect for the alterity of the Other. Dialogue requires listening to the Other, which means that understanding can never be “cashed out” in terms of *neutrally* compiling a set of propositions that the Other believes to be true, because the Other’s holding them to be true entails *our* reckoning with, and doing justice to, the Other’s claim to truth.³⁶ Hence, understanding marks a genuine modification to the horizon of the Same. Raimundo Panikkar raises this crucial hermeneutic point specifically in the context of comparative philosophy:

In other words, comparative philosophy, *qua* philosophy, makes us aware of our own myth by introducing us to the myth of others and by this very fact changes our own horizon. [...] It saves us from falling into the fallacy of believing that all the others live in myths except us.³⁷

Fourthly, any presumption that we are irrevocably sealed within our own linguistic habits overlooks the historicity of our linguistic practices as concrete responses to communicative

³⁶ Note that in German as in English, *hören* means both “to listen” and “to obey”; consequently, to listen to the Other, in the full hermeneutical sense, is to behave in accordance to the openness required for the truths of the Other to lay their claim on us.

³⁷ Raimundo Panikkar, “What is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?” in Gerald James Larson & Eliot Deutsch, eds. *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 134.

needs. This is not to say that we can voluntarily leap across a history of language-use to choose a new grammar: rather it is to recognize that such habits of speaking and thinking do not form a closed-system. Language does not shut us inside a single world, it is our essential mode of openness to a multiplicity of worlds. Again, this is a basic Gadamerian point about the positive role that prejudices play in boot-strapping understanding: "The historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are the biases of our openness to the world."³⁸ Moreover, it is precisely in our encounters with alterity that our linguistic and cognitive practices evolve in order to *accommodate*—to respond to, adapt to, to make a place for, to shelter—the Other.³⁹

My fifth point is somewhat radical in that it involves jettisoning a basic conceit of epistemology that continues to permeate Western philosophy, but which is especially detrimental to comparative philosophy. That is, the belief that all, or even most, of our understanding is the kind of thing that can be exchanged without loss or supplementation.⁴⁰ This epistemic leap of faith fails to distinguish between truth and understanding, and thereby fails to recognize that most of our truths are embedded within holistic contexts that individuate and motivate the significance of those truths *qua*

³⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Ed. David E. Linge. Trans. David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California, 1977, 9.

³⁹ My use of "accommodate" is intended to convey a sense of sincere hospitality that lies between an utter repudiation of the Other and a complete sacrifice of self before the Other. It is a form of solicitude in which I contentedly reform my projects in view of the Other. To my mind, both repudiation and sacrifice are unwelcome extremes in relation to alterity. Clearly, repudiation constitutes a kind of violence towards the Other, but so does a sacrificial relation, because it eliminates even productive resistances that benefit the Other—mere acquiescence cannot provide an adequate environment for the Other's own encounter with alterity. For instance, sacrifice robs the Other of her opportunity to realize herself morally by accommodating my alterity.

⁴⁰ Here, I am subscribing to a phenomenological notion of truth as "disclosure," rather than a propositional notion of truth based on correspondence. However, even a deflationary correspondence notion such as "snow is white" is true if and only if 'snow is white,' depends on the experience of the whiteness of snow. Hence, Heidegger's claim that truth as "disclosure" founds truth as "correctness."

understanding. Thus, while truth itself is not a private affair, since its disclosure depends on such things as language and practices that are interpersonal and publicly available, the integration of a truth's significance or weighting within a holistic web of beliefs is often idiosyncratic.⁴¹ Since understanding is not simply the exchange of capsules of already meaningful truth, but the creation of meaning via the integration (interpretation) of truths into an already existing web of beliefs and practices, Gadamer tells us: "It suffices to say that one understands *differently when one understands at all*" (TM 280). As a consequence, comparative philosophy must recognize that understanding is not an ahistorical process of reconstruction, but a historically situated process of thoughtful mediation (*denkenden Vermittlung*).⁴² Its authentic purpose needs to be the critical revision of its horizon, that is, to allow the gravity of the Other's world to displace the inertia of the Same. This disarticulation of the economy of the Same is precisely what Richard Rorty takes to be the power of edifying discourse: "For edifying discourse is *supposed* to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings" (PMN 360). This critical revision involves an appreciation of something new about the world that the Other discloses and shares with us rather than a misguided conceit aimed at understanding the Other as the Other understands herself.

⁴¹ Clearly, some narrower disciplines and practices include more or less explicit standards, historical precedence, or a shared practical "sense" of how new truths *ought* to be integrated, which is to say a kind of discipline-specific "rationality."

⁴² This recognition of the primacy of situated understanding over de-contextualized truths provides support for Hall and Ames' comparative method of *ars contextualis*, which "seeks to identify those contexts within which one's arguments, as well as the proposed alternatives are relevant," from David Hall and Roger Ames, *Anticipating China*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995, xx; hereafter indicated as "AC."

Such an effort is not only presumptuous, but disconnects us from the truth that the Other is sharing with us. It is a conceit that prevents us from *appreciating*⁴³ the Other:

By factoring the other person's standpoint into what he is claiming to say, we are making our own standpoint safely unattainable. [...] Acknowledging the otherness of the other in this way, making him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth (TM 303-304).

Nor should comparativists view alien traditions as reservoirs of wisdom providing alternative solutions to the same age-old philosophical problems. Comparative philosophy that remains content with locating like-problems within alien philosophical traditions remains historically naïve and ethically suspect.⁴⁴ Indeed, Gadamer's argument against conceiving Western philosophy in terms of a "history of problems" must extend across traditions. According to Gadamer, the concrete historical context of inquiry is necessary to the identity conditions of a problem. A problem cannot be *dislocated* from the situation motivating it as a genuine problem: "[t]here is no such thing, in fact, as a point outside history from which the identity of a problem can be conceived within the vicissitudes of the history of attempts to solve it" (TM 375). On Gadamer's view, the horizon of inquiry is integral to the semantic determination of the question, that is, its historical embeddedness

⁴³ Not only will I be employing the concept "appreciate" as a technical term of art within the context of this study, but my use of "appreciate," as an ethically dense concept, will draw on the full range of its semantic richness: 1) to esteem, 2) to appraise, 3) to understand 4) to welcome, 5) to be grateful, and 6) to increase in value.

⁴⁴ Approaching alien traditions with an established catalog of *the* philosophical problems does a great deal to reinforce a deeply engrained cultural chauvinism, by helping to preserve a subtle double standard with respect to evaluating the success of alien philosophical traditions. That is, *if* we can locate, what we take to be, the same problem in another tradition, *then* it speaks to the genuine difficulty of the problem. However, *if* we fail to locate a particular problem in an alien tradition, *then* it indicates a lack; namely, the alien tradition has remained naïve to a real problem they ought to have seen. Finally, *if* we cannot find a problem within our tradition corresponding to one occupying an alien intellectual tradition, *then* this points to our philosophical achievement and, once again, a failure on their part. Such a decontextualized approach to philosophical problems 1) forces alien traditions into "no win" evaluational logic wherein our tradition functions as the measure for others, and 2) silences the revelation of difference by initiating the inquiry from a presupposition of identity.

gives, or makes, sense of the question: “[t]he concept of the problem is clearly an abstraction, namely the detachment of the content of the question from the question that in fact first reveals it [...] Such a ‘problem’ has fallen out of the motivated context of questioning from which it receives the clarity of its sense” (TM 376). In other words, an authentic problem presses itself upon us.

While this critique of the modular treatment of decontextualized problems resists facile identification across historically and culturally disparate traditions, it does not entail that an encounter with disparate traditions cannot disclose something new within *our* line of questioning. As Eliot Deutsch suggests: “one of the significant creative functions of comparative philosophy is to examine how one’s formulation of problems can themselves be reformulated in the light of alternative possibilities.”⁴⁵ Indeed, the central thrust of this study consists of trying to gain novel insight into the “question of the Other” via an engagement with the Other: Japanese (and Chinese) philosophy. But, to be clear, I am *not* claiming that the “question of the Other” occupies a place within the various East Asian philosophical traditions in any way corresponding to its pressing centrality within contemporary Western consciousness. Indeed, this is precisely the point of entry: Why is this not a pressing problem within Chinese and Japanese philosophy?⁴⁶ In asking this question, I am not asking after a perceived *lack* in the Other’s tradition, but after a perceived *difference*. In other words, posing this question authentically guides us towards a transcendental inquiry, namely, what are the operative differences in philosophical

⁴⁵ Deutsch, Eliot, “Speculations on the Past/Assessments of the Future.” Past-Presidents Panel for the Opening Plenary Session 25th Anniversary Conference of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, 1993, 7.

⁴⁶ This question clearly does not have a univocal answer. One could give a number of different accounts—historical, sociological, religious, political, linguistic, etc.—as to why “the question of the Other” has not come to the fore. However, since I am focused on the “question of the Other” as it has been asked within philosophical discourse, my interest vis-à-vis the East Asian tradition concerns relevant differences in philosophical milieu.

context (presuppositions, logics, cognitive metaphors, styles of rationality, etc.), which continue to diffuse the emergence of such an anxiety about the Other?

My sixth point regarding hermeneutics concerns the positive notion of “hermeneutic distance” as providing the critical space for accommodating the Other. According to Ricoeur, not only is distancing a “condition of understanding” (HHS 144), but it is also the condition for the critique of ideology.⁴⁷ For Ricoeur, the very transmission of discourse involves a distancing that *liberates* discourse from the authorial, sociological, and psychological confines that attempt to control the mediation of the text’s meaning. This distance provides the requisite space for the insertion and intervention of critical consciousness: “The emancipation of the text constitutes the most fundamental condition for the recognition of a critical instance at the heart of interpretation; for distancing now belongs to the mediation itself” (HHS 91). This “critical instance” involves a return to *die Sache* through what Ricoeur calls the “referential moment.” Ricoeur distinguishes between two orders of reference, which he connects to the Fregean distinction between *sense*, the immanent structure of the discourse itself, and *reference*, the text’s capacity to disclose the world:

The strategy of this discourse involves holding two moments in equilibrium: suspending the reference of ordinary language and releasing a second order reference, which is another name for what we have designated above as the world opened up by the work (HHS 93).

The distance separating these two orders of reference opens up the critical space to evaluate the claims of the text, on the side of the Other, and to critically assess my own beliefs and prejudices, on the side of the Same: “The power of the text to open a

⁴⁷ See Ricoeur’s essay “Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, for an insightful mediation between the Gadamer and Habermas debate in which he convincingly argues that hermeneutics is necessarily critical, while the critique of ideology is necessarily hermeneutical.

dimension of reality implies in principle a recourse against any given reality and thereby the possibility of a critique of the real" (HHS 93). In other words, any understanding of *die Sache* is mediated by our direct phenomenological experience of it. Thus, our phenomenological contact with the world spans the breach between the hermeneutical and the critical moments.

Finally, by paying due attention to philosophical hermeneutics, comparative philosophy is able to situate itself appropriately between two sets of dichotomous approaches that give the illusion of genuine diversity, but remain stratagems for preserving the hegemony of the Same. Firstly, the extremes that François Jullien calls "naïve assimilation," which ignores the possibility of substantive differences between the Other and the Same, and "simplistic comparativism," which assumes that "ready-made, suitable frameworks exist for apprehending the differences in question."⁴⁸ And secondly, what Bernstein calls the "double danger" of "imperialistic colonization," wherein the Same presumes its right and capacity to adopt the standpoint of the Other, and what he calls "inauthentic exotification," which alienates the Other through the fetishization of difference (CM 100). Against these extremes, philosophical hermeneutics describes the process of mediation that occurs *between* the Same and the Other in genuine understanding: "*The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between* [the polarity of familiarity and strangeness]" (TM 295). Or, as Ricoeur puts it, hermeneutics is "communication in and through distance" (HHS 131).

⁴⁸ François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 1995, 20; hereafter indicated as "PoT."

1.3.3.1 Hermeneutics and the Arcs of Exposition

More concretely, the organization of this study explicitly and deliberately parallels the structure of the hermeneutic circle, which reflects my commitment to philosophical hermeneutics as phenomenologically and comparatively significant. Let me briefly outline what I take to be the main “arcs” of the circle.

The circle begins at the end of this chapter where I offer a short phenomenological sketch as a leading-clue for clarifying the basic concepts of the Other and the Same, and which will serve as a touchstone for the subsequent hermeneutical and deconstructive analyses.⁴⁹ The second chapter offers a preliminary encounter with the alterity of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism as the philosophical backdrop for Japanese thought. The third chapter presents a critical deconstruction of the Same (the phenomenological tradition from Kant to Levinas) in order to bring to the fore some of the prejudices of the tradition as preparatory for returning to a narrower and more sustained engagement with the Japanese philosophical tradition. After a critical revision of the horizon of the phenomenological tradition in light of the deconstructive analysis of Chapter 3, and the encounter with the Japanese tradition in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 returns to the phenomenological sketch presented in the first chapter in order to more fully explicate the conditions for a genuine encounter with the Other. This explication forms the basis of a normative account of our relation to alterity, which is summarized in Chapter 6.

⁴⁹ More accurately, this study represents a culminating series of revolutions belonging to an already existing circle of understanding, which extends far beyond the confines of these pages. It is hermeneutically significant that this project be understood as situated within an ongoing engagement with Asian philosophy, and, in particular, Japanese philosophy, that includes not only my investment, but the investment of my teachers and the history of comparative philosophy as a discipline.

This particular trajectory is significant in a couple of respects. Firstly, since Japanese philosophy emerges against the linguistic and philosophical backdrop of Chinese thought, my preliminary departure into Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhist thought is necessary for helping to clarify many of the key presuppositions informing the background of Japanese philosophical consciousness.

Secondly, my primary comparative encounter is with contemporary Japanese philosophy that offers distinctive hermeneutical advantages owing to what Graham Parkes calls "*the uniqueness of its double genealogy*."⁵⁰ In addition to inheriting the philosophical legacy of its own tradition—Confucianism and neo-Confucianism, Lao-Zhuang Daoism, various schools of Buddhist thought, and its native Shintô—the Kyoto School philosophers inherited a dialogue with Western philosophy that had been initiated at the outset of the Meiji period.⁵¹ Thus, the original philosophical positions of Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani, Watsuji and the like, emerge as self-conscious articulations of a genuinely Japanese *tetsugaku* ("philosophy") against the background of significant cross-cultural dialogue.⁵² Especially relevant to this study is the fact that the Kyoto School thinkers engaged, for the most part, the same phenomenological lineage occupying the third chapter. Moreover, due to a perceived lack of technical philosophical concepts, the Japanese thinkers appropriated some of the philosophical vocabulary from the German Idealist and

⁵⁰ Graham Parkes, "Nietzsche and Nishitani on the Self-Overcoming of Nihilism." *International Studies in Philosophy* XXV/2, 51.

⁵¹ The "Kyoto School" names Nishida Kitarô, Tanabe Hajime, Kiyoshi Miki, Nishitani Keiji, Hisamatsu Shin-ichi, Yamanouchi Tokuryu, Tosaka Jun, Takeuchi Yoshinori, Ueda, Shizuteru, Tsujimura Kôichi, Abe Masao, and, by association, D.T. Suzuki, Watsuji Tetsurô, and Kuki Shûzô.

⁵² From a technical standpoint, most of these Japanese scholars were in an extraordinary position vis-à-vis comparative philosophy, due to the scope of their cognizance of Western philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology, and political thought etc., and in their mastery of European languages. Indeed, many of the Kyoto School thinkers, including Tanabe, Nishitani, and Kuki not only dialogued with Heidegger, but also encountered such figures as Husserl, Rickert, Jaspers, Bergson, and Sartre.

phenomenological traditions. Consequently, the uniqueness of this comparative situation lies in the fact that our philosophical "Others" have already provided preliminary explications of their thought via our own philosophical vocabulary.⁵³

Nevertheless, one of the obvious dangers attending this opportunity lies in the possibility that the utilization of foreign conceptual schemes already subverts the possibility of articulating a distinctly Japanese experience. Although this concern is to some degree legitimate, it would be simply reactionary to think that the carefully selected use of Western concepts could alienate these thinkers from the lived-concreteness of Japanese consciousness. In other words, such reactionary stances must be reminded of the holism of meaning at the conceptual level and, even more to the point, a holism about theoretical-representational practices in relation to practical modes of being in the world.

Secondly, we should not be too quick to underestimate the linguistic, historical, and philosophical training, as well as the "raw" intellectual acumens, critically guiding this adoption of foreign concepts. Indeed, a further reason for relaxing this anxiety can be found in the stark originality and conceptual depth displayed in their critiques of Western thought. In other words, it quickly becomes evident that the absorption of a foreign philosophical vocabulary does not necessarily generate a theoretical blindness to the profound differences in the metaphysical and logical presuppositions structuring the philosophical discourses of the two traditions.

⁵³ Here, it is important to recognize that "vocabulary" is not synonymous with "language," because although the Kyoto thinkers employed many concepts belonging to the German philosophical tradition, this employment involved working out Japanese translations using Chinese characters or *kanji*.

1.3.4 Genealogy and Archaeology

On my view, any thorough critique must address the formative history of its subject matter, that is, it must *critically situate* its matter according to genealogy (Nietzsche) or archaeology (Foucault). And yet, this process of situating the matter at hand must not be confused with locating an origin.⁵⁴ Such a desire would reduce genealogy and archaeology to being simply modes of epistemology, and thereby place them squarely within the history of metaphysics. Rather, genealogy and archaeology document the continuous emergence of beginnings; they pursue the processes in which notions of origin, essence, substance, truth, morality, and history can begin to make sense.

The Nietzschean conception of genealogy, according to Deleuze, “means both the value of origin and the origin of values [...] Genealogy means the differential element of values from which their value itself derives.”⁵⁵ In other words, it supplies a critical standpoint, which uncovers and explicates a history of the relationships between values and their conditions of emergence: “Critical philosophy has two inseparable moments: the referring back of all things and any kind of origin of values, but also the referring back of these values to something which is, as it were, their origin and determine their value” (*NP* 2). In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche describes the project of his book as the issuing of a “new demand”:

⁵⁴ Once again, in his essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault makes a rather telling statement that is as much a description of his conception of archaeology as it is of Nietzsche’s genealogy: “What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity” (LCP 142).

⁵⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, 2; hereafter indicated as *NP*.

-- We need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question*—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and change (morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison), a knowledge of a kind that has never yet existed or even been desired.⁵⁶

If we take Nietzsche literally here, genealogy represents a kind of knowledge that “has never yet existed or even been desired,” in other words genealogy does not arise as simply another manifestation of the “will to truth.” Rather, it is a practice of interrogating the emergence of the will to truth and critically displacing the economy of the desire to know. For Nietzsche, it is not only a question of asking, “Who speaks?” but also of asking, “From where?” While the first question locates the perspective of evaluation that is the subject, the second locates the subject within the larger perspective of the history of values. Thus, Nietzsche generates a radical critique of the *historical relations* and *power relations* mediating between and across values—a mediation that is perspective-constituting and truth-constituting.

According to Alan Sheridan, Foucault’s related notion of archaeology aims at unearthing “a set of rules of formation that determine the conditions of possibility of all that can be said within a particular discourse at a given time.”⁵⁷ In other words, Foucault interrogates how a discourse differentiates and legitimizes itself (forms its identity) within and against the discursive and non-discursive practices already in play and at work. More narrowly, the real novelty of archaeology, like Nietzsche’s practice of genealogy, lies in its explicit focus on *relations* as the definitive sites of power/knowledge. For one,

⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals/Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, “Preface” §6; hereafter indicated as “GM.”

⁵⁷ Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*. New York: Tavistock Publications, 1980, 48.

archaeological analyses pay attention to the *transmission* of ideas across discursive practices, rather than trying to simply-locate the origins of innovation. Secondly, for Foucault, *contradictions* within systems of thought function as animating points of friction, such that the question is not how to resolve the contradiction, but how the discursive practices within that system of thought negotiate its two sides, that is, how has the system managed to cope with its contradictions? Thirdly, archaeology concentrates on *comparative descriptions* between discursive practices or “language games,” e.g., between medicine and law or between politics and psychiatry, and between discursive and non-discursive practices or “forms of life,” e.g., between legal discourse and modes of subsistence.⁵⁸ Fourthly, and as a consequence of the first three, archaeology examines the *transformations* within discursive practices, which means articulating the differences and process of differentiation, rather than attending to, and supposing the unity of, what has changed.

Each of these methodological differences, which separate archaeology from traditional methods of historiography, is rooted in an attention to the efficacy of relations across and between practices, rather than to the efficacy of objects. Indeed, on Foucault’s view, it is precisely the intersections between practices that prepare the “surfaces of emergence” on which objects are delimited as relevant. For Foucault, focusing solely on the object ignores the background of interwoven practices, which establishes the criteria of continuity and thereby forms the inferential basis for attestations of identity: “[I]t is not the objects that remain constant, nor the domain that they form; it is not even their point of emergence or their mode of characterization; but *the relation between* the surfaces on which they

⁵⁸ Wittgenstein’s notions of “language games” and “forms of life” are useful parallels for clarifying Foucault’s notions of discursive and non-discursive practices. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Logical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968, for Wittgenstein’s relevant discussions of these concepts.

appear, on which they can be delimited, on which they can be analysed and specified [italics mine]."⁵⁹ To be clear, Foucault is not advocating a form of idealism in which the world as such is mind-dependent;⁶⁰ rather he is addressing the fluidity of the conditions by which a particular aspect of the world is demarcated as a relevant object for specific knowledge practices: "They [discursive relations] do not define its internal constitution, but what enables it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to situate itself in relation to them, to define difference, its irreducibility, and even perhaps its heterogeneity, in short, to be placed in a field of exteriority" (AoK 45). Similarly, the interactions across discursive practices establish the "authorities of delimitation," in other words, which positions and institutions hold the authority to govern the kinds of meaningful things that can be said about the objects of their domain, as well as, the "grids of specification," which mediate the differentiation, classification, and juxtaposition of objects within the domain of discourse.

From the standpoint of this study, genealogy and archaeology serve two functions. Firstly, such methodological considerations inform the critical deconstruction of the philosophical histories of alterity in the Continental European and Japanese traditions. Since the purpose of enacting these surveys is to reveal the dominant presuppositions regulating conceptions of alterity and relations to the Other, and thereby revealing decisive points of intervention, the specific choice of texts was guided by the fact that these works have held positions of power within their respective philosophical canons. Thus, both the continental-phenomenological analyses of the third chapter and the Japanese

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, 47; hereafter indicated as "AoK."

⁶⁰ Foucault distinguishes between "real" or "primary" relations as those relations of causal dependence that form real objects, "reflexive" or "secondary" relations constituting the internal logic of a discourse, and "discursive relations," which hold between discourses and form discursive objects.

philosophical analyses of the fourth chapter, engage those systems of thought that have occupied definitive places within their respective traditions, and therefore acted as keystones maintaining the integrity of the discursive arch determining alterity.

Secondly, they provide the conceptual resources for analyzing the formation and regulation of the domain of considerables, which is to say that the manner in which the discourses variously determine the Other as an "object" of concern is central to the problem of moral considerability. I have already noted Charles Taylor's account of the "metaphysical descriptions" that define who or what is included within the domain of moral considerables. Though Taylor is correct about the fact that efforts to justify the domain of moral discourse inevitably retreat to such metaphysical descriptions, his account fails to explain transformations in the domain of considerables. Namely, how particular metaphysical descriptions acquire the status of gate-keeping, and how descriptions gain and lose dominance. For my part, I am interested in the delimitation of the domain of moral considerables and its points of intersection with surrounding discourses concerning alterity.

1.4 The West and the Other: A False Dichotomy

The question of the Other, and corresponding concerns about difference, are distinctly modern in their form, more so than their content. That is to say, that modernity's anxiety about the Other arises from *how* it raises its concern, rather than the subject matter *about which* it asks. For example, philosophy's preoccupation with ethics has long evidenced a concern about others, and logic, from its inception, has thought about difference. Thus, the root of this gathering tenor of unease is to be sought in the historical unfolding of the question, and the manner in which it has been determined by philosophical discourse.

On my view, Kant and Hegel mark the definitive points of departure for a false dichotomy between transcendence and identification, a dichotomy in which contemporary conversations about alterity have remained thoroughly entrenched. In the modern period, Immanuel Kant definitively secures the tradition of transcendence by arguing for a radical division between the empirical domain of *our* experience and the transcendent domain of things-in-themselves (*das Ding-an-sich*). In an effort to counter Kant, Hegel argues that the historical-logical development of "spirit" (*Geist*) entails the necessary overcoming of the moment of difference separating self and Other, and thus, he narrates the ongoing establishment of higher-orders of identification. In his article, "Hegel's Ethics," Allan Wood observes the fundamental divide separating Kant and Hegel vis-à-vis alterity:

For them (Kant and Fichte), autonomous action is that which has its source in the agent's pure reason and not in the agent's sensuous impulses, still less in the external (natural or social) world. For Hegel, however, this represents a false and rigid conception of the relation of the self to otherness. Spirit, Hegel insists, is "self-restoring sameness" (PhG ¶18); it stands in an essential relation to otherness, and its actualization consists not in separation from its other, but in overcoming that otherness. ⁶¹

In contemporary discussions, the basic Kantian and Hegelian orientations continue to determine thinking about alterity. ⁶² For example, Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas, two contemporary thinkers that have struggled profoundly with the question of the Other, remain within an ultimately Kantian framework. ⁶³ Sartre's conception of the "inter-subjective gap" and Levinas' notion of "transcendence" preserve a conviction in the

⁶¹ "Hegel's Ethics" by Allen Wood appears in Frederick C. Beiser, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1993, 219.

⁶² This "false dichotomy" could also be traced to Plato and Aristotle, but because the Kantian and Hegelian systems have had such direct influence on the terms of the contemporary discussion regarding alterity, it seems reasonable to focus on their thought.

⁶³ Although his engagement with the Other is deeply indebted to Hegel's analysis of the "master-slave dialectic," Sartre never relinquishes the fundamental priority of the "inter-subjective gap" and therefore, unlike Hegel, fails to "sublimate" the radical difference separating self and Other. Thus, Sartre's ultimate position vis-à-vis the Other is, in at least one important sense, more Kantian than Hegelian.

absolute *abyss* separating self from Other. On the Hegelian side, more communitarian thinkers⁶⁴ such as Alasdair MacIntyre⁶⁵ and Charles Taylor⁶⁶ cling to a naïve faith in the possibility of unproblematically sublimating difference. I contend that neither the Kantian nor the Hegelian positions are satisfactory from an ethical standpoint, because they entail either a resigned ethical *cynicism* (transcendence) or an untenable ethical *optimism* (identification) with respect to our encounter with the Other.⁶⁷ As an alternative to the

⁶⁴ In *Situating the Self*, Benhabib points to the fact that thinkers like MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor, and Walzer are often designated as “neo-Aristotelian,” but that “Gadamer so powerfully synthesized Aristotle’s ethical theory and Hegel’s critique of Kant that after his work the two strands of argumentation became almost indistinguishable” (SS 25). Benhabib also makes a helpful distinction between what she calls “integrationist” and “participationist” strains within communitarianism. In contrast to the desire for “reconciliation” and the “revitalization of a coherent value scheme” unifying a community, the participationist “does not see social differentiation as an aspect of modernity which needs to be overcome” (SS 77-8).

⁶⁵ MacIntyre’s desire to evaluate “rationality” across different traditions, i.e., *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1989), depends on unified grounds of commensurability and evaluation that is often lacking, particularly when he tries to assess across Confucian virtues and Aristotelian virtue theory. Because MacIntyre maintains such a strong and univocal conception of truth that is essentially Aristotelian, he cannot help but end up with a somewhat more sophisticated and less outrightly dismissive analysis of classical Chinese culture, but nevertheless an analytical-evaluative approach that is, at bottom, Hegelian in its engagement with alterity.

⁶⁶ For example, in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, Taylor writes, “In fact, it will almost always be the case that the adequate language in which we can understand another society is not our language of understanding, or theirs, but rather what one could call a language of perspicuous contrast. This would be a language in which we could formulate both their way of life and ours as alternative possibilities in relation to some human constants at work in both” (125). Taylor’s move here is typically Hegelian, his appeal to “a language of perspicuous contrast” is an appeal to an order of representation capable of sublimating the differences of the two societies: alterity of the Other disappears into a meta-language.

In my opinion the classic phenomenological models of immanence and transcendence, predicated on the constituting role of the subject, has led the continental tradition more towards the Kantian perspective of *separation*, while the Anglo-American focus on the liberal tradition of rights, social contracts, and legal subjects has produced an affinity towards the Hegelian emphasis on *unity* under law. To be sure, this suggestion is not intended to be exhaustive, as it ignores the counter-examples within the traditions and the substantial historical differences across the two traditions. It is only meant to indicate one possible direction for clarifying 1) some of the theoretical presuppositions leading to the adoption of the Kantian or Hegelian positions, and 2) the divergent tendency of the continental and Anglo-American traditions to prefer one side of the dichotomy over the other.

⁶⁷ In his book, *The Other*. Trans. Christopher Macann. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986, Michael Theunissen presents the “dialogical principle” of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig as an alternative to the transcendental model (Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre) and, presumably, an alternative to models of identification, which fail to take alterity seriously. However, the distinction between the “I-Thou” and “I-It” relation already presupposes the

Kantian-Hegelian dichotomy, I will argue for a horizontal conception of alterity gradually shading from relative alterity, namely, an overlapping relation of mutual constitution, implication, and dependency, towards a liminal frontier of absolute alterity given in terms of the irreducible alterity, autonomy, and dignity of the Other.

In light of the Cartesian ego, and the establishment of a distinctively modern notion of subjectivity, philosophy's approach to alterity became entrenched in terms of securing a correspondence between interiority and exteriority, between a concept and an "outside" thing. In the language of Richard Rorty, our "glassy essence" was to be the "mirror of nature" and therefore, the mirror of the Other.⁶⁸ With this metaphysical division performed on the basis of the drive for epistemic certainty, philosophy inherits a legacy of distance, estrangement, and alienation from the Other. Consequently, much of modern philosophy has been preoccupied with recovering our connection, particularly our epistemic contact, with the world. Nishitani explains this paradoxical predicament: "We are used to representing things (*hyôshô suru* 表象する), however, as objects (*taishô* 対象) on the field of sensation or the field of reason, thus keeping them at a *distance* from ourselves. This *distance* means that we are drawn to things, and that we in turn draw things to ourselves [italics mine]" (RN 123).⁶⁹ In other words, representation necessarily presumes a doubling—a spatial or temporal distance—that is the logical basis for the act of representing a thing. Here, I would like to distinguish between two senses of representation:

ontological-ethical distinction between human beings and everything else—a distinction predicated on a deeper assumption of identity, namely, that a "Thou" is like "I," while an "It" is not-like "I." Consequently, on my view, the dialogical model represents a particular strain of identification rooted in a "community of speakers," and thus it fails to provide a sufficiently radical re-thinking of alterity.

⁶⁸The basic project of Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* is the rehabilitation of philosophy from its enchantment with Cartesianism and representational epistemologies.

⁶⁹As should be clear, Nishitani is pointing to the shared conceptual involvement of *representations* (表象) and *objects* (対象) in *shô* 象 ("image; shape").

a weaker, pragmatic sense of representation that can be roughly construed as “hermeneutic,” a consciously open-ended and contextualized directedness towards phenomena; and a stronger epistemological-metaphysical sense of representation that can be roughly characterized as “assertoric,” a final de-contextualized ascription of essence.⁷⁰ The stronger form assumes a “naïve” metaphysical realism⁷¹ supported by a *pre-nihilistic* common sense (the field of reason), while the weaker sense belongs to a *post-nihilistic*, and thereby transformed wisdom (the standpoint of *sūnyatā*).

On Nishitani’s view, neither the idealist nor realist programs are capable of getting in touch with the reality of things, or a thing’s “originating-situation” (元根底 *motokontei*).⁷² This incapacity results from the fact that both metaphysical positions oppose each other on the same plane of approach, namely, the “field of reason—a plane thoroughly structured according to the logic of representation. In their 1991 book, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor

⁷⁰ I am consciously paralleling Heidegger’s distinction between the “existential-hermeneutical ‘as’” of circumspective interpretation (*umsichtig Auslegung*) and the “assertoric-apophantical ‘as’” of what is present-to-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) in §33 of *Being and Time*. Moreover, what I am calling a *hermeneutic* notion of representation, Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch call *construal*: “We can begin by noting a relatively weak and uncontroversial sense of representation. This sense is purely semantic: It refers to anything that can be interpreted as being about something. This is the sense of representation as construal, since nothing is about something else without construing it as being some way” from their book, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991, 134; hereafter indicated as “EM.”

⁷¹ Here, the “naïve” carries a twofold sense, namely, it refers to a *strong* metaphysical realism unmodified by antirealist concerns, which is the conventional philosophical use of the term; and secondly, it refers to a metaphysical realism that is wholly innocent to the experience of nihilism, which is the critical pivot in Nishitani’s thought between the “field of reason” and the “field of *sūnyatā*.”

⁷² Here my translation of *motokontei* as “originating-situation” differs from Van Bragt’s translation, “home-ground.” *Moto* means origin, basis, root, source, and beginning, and *kontei* means root, basis, and foundation, I have chosen to translate it as “originating-situation” in order to preserve the concepts place in a thoroughly concrete and process-oriented worldview. In other words, each new transformation of a thing within the nexus of interdependency has a starting situation, its *dharma*-position, without presupposing an origin or home, which suggests the notion of essence. Moreover, the language of “ground” invokes a univocal ontological source, rather than complex causal web of interconnected conditions that is the Buddhist idea of “dependent co-origination.”

Rosch argue, in the same vein as Nishitani, that representation forms the common ground ~~between~~ the extremes of realism and idealism: "These two extremes both take [a strong notion of] representation as their central notion: in the first case representation is used to recover what is outer; in the second case it is used to project what is inner" (*EM* 172). And moreover, alongside Nishitani, they agree that an underlying nihilism supports such a logic of representation: "[T]he Cartesian anxiety requires not only that we believe in a self that we know cannot be found but also that we believe in a world to which we have no access. And once again, the logic of such a predicament leads inevitably to a condition of nihilism" (*EM* 143).

Thus, the realist's table-pounding claim that the world exists "out there" independent of how it appears to us and any vocabulary for describing it already assumes the subject/object divide forming the very basis of representation: "[T]heir objective reality has yet to elude the contradiction of being represented as something lying beyond representation" (*RN* 121).⁷³ Nishitani refers to this subtle and beguiling contradiction as the "paradox of representation." However, in an important sense, the realist position is far more problematic than idealism precisely because of its natural appeal to common sense. The origin of this natural appeal lies in the fact that common sense is shaped by socio-historical practices of rational justification, and therefore, like realism, has already been "constituted through a covert inclusion of a relationship to the subjective" (*RN* 120). Thus, realism's seduction of the natural attitude betrays a profound narcissism in which common sense has simply become enchanted with its own reflection.

⁷³ In the light of Nishitani's claim that a fundamental abyss, or groundlessness, undergirds the "field of reason," it is interesting to consider the related claim that the logic of representation rests on the subject-object *divide*!

1.4.1 Kant and Transcendence

The Kantian move from “dogmatic metaphysics” to “critical metaphysics” fails to escape the question of alterity framed in terms of a problem of representation. Rather, the Kantian “revolution” ultimately tightens the grip of Descartes by leaving its basic presuppositions unchallenged. The *Critique of Pure Reason* aims at completing the Cartesian project by attempting to extend the certainty of the *cogito* to our knowledge of the world, not by appealing externally to a benevolent and omnipotent god, but by placing the world inside the *cogito*. Thus, Kant effectively completes the formation of modern Western consciousness by installing Cartesianism in the deepest reaches of its unconscious workings.

Although the shift from “dogmatic” to “critical” metaphysics involves a new level of reflection with respect to the *formation* of representations, it fails to break from the hegemony of representational consciousness as such: “Kant looks on things from the very outset as *objects*; or, to put it the other way around, his standpoint is that of *representation*. In his theoretical philosophy, an objective, representational point of view is presupposed as a constant base” (RN 133). Before Kant, philosophy strove to overcome the gulf separating subject *from* substance, where substance was a feature of the external object. However, with Kant, substance refers to a fundamental aspect of subjectivity; namely, a *transcendental* feature of thought itself, and not a *transcendent* feature of the world. Kant simply reverses the direction of representation. Whereas dogmatic metaphysics understood representations as caused by objects, critical metaphysics understands objects as constituted by our representational activity. In both cases, representations remain the fundamental medium bridging the distance separating the self from the world (Other).

A consequence of this reversal is that Kant's empirical realism-transcendental idealism expands and absolutizes the inherited Cartesian dualism, and effectively *seals* the subject within an economy of representations. The dualism is *expanded* in that the internal becomes equated with experience as such and not merely restricted to the self-reflective *cogito*. It is *absolutized*, because no *arché* is capable of bridging the gulf between the empirical and the transcendental realms in the way that God guarantees knowledge of the external world for Descartes, and thereby the possibility of encountering the Other. Thus, for Descartes, the Other is there, but she appears on a horizon lacking clarity and distinctness, which, according to his methodology, puts the Other in doubt. However, given Kant's more radical dualism, the Other is transcendent, and hence we can never encounter the Other.

1.4.2 Hegel and Identification

Hegel, on the other hand, challenges Kant's conception of reason as inert and ahistorical. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel depicts reason as situated within the historical movement of *Geist*, and therefore, is able to give a genealogical account of its concrete historical emergence via the development of the concept's ability to continually supply higher-orders of totality via sublation (*Aufhebung*). Thus, while Kant's notion of reason describes a spontaneous faculty at the base of our interiority, that is, our subjectivity, Hegel's notion of reason evolves beyond individual consciousness towards a transpersonal reason unfolding as the socio-historical consciousness at large, namely, as law, culture, art, morality, civil society, and so on.

In its thoroughgoing historicism with respect to the production of representations, Hegel marks a significant advance over Kant. However, Hegel's unwavering conviction in

a single trajectory of progress and the indisputable value of increasingly comprehensive and totalizing representations reveals a constitutional intolerance for any notion of irreducible alterity. For Hegel, the Other is destined to be sublated in the concept.

In his 1930 lecture on *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Heidegger explicates Hegel's key notion of *Aufhebung* in terms of the Latin *tollere*, *conservare*, and *elevare*:

This sublating or *Aufhebung* must, of course, be conceived, as always in Hegel, in terms of the resonance of its threefold meaning: *tollere*, removing and eliminating the mere, initial illusion; *conservare*, preserving and including in the experience, and as an *elevare*, a lifting up to a higher level of knowing itself and its known.⁷⁴

"*Tollere*," means—"to take away," "to bar," or "to defeat," while "*conservare*" takes its root in *servare*—"to keep in safety," "to preserve with care," or "to keep from destruction." And "*elevare*" originally signifies "to render light," "to lighten," and, by extension, "to lift or raise." In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel clarifies the use of his *Aufhebung* in terms of *tollere*, but without making specific reference to *conservare* or *elevare*:

The double meaning of the Latin *tollere* [...] does not go so far; its affirmative determination signifies only a lifting-up. Something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this more particular signification as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a *moment*.⁷⁵

This brief detour into the notion of *Aufhebung* highlights the intrinsic difficulties of Hegel's thought for theorizing a robust alterity; more precisely, the problem of the Hegelian model for the question of the Other is the loss attending the progressive development of a comprehensive totality. Each order of totality is achieved at the expense of purging alterity, either by rendering it irrelevant, as nature, women, and the colonies are left outside of genuine "culture" for Hegel, or it is assimilated through reflection, which is to

⁷⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Parvis Emad & Kenneth Maly. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988, 28.

⁷⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller. New York: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969, 107.

absorb the Other into the sameness of the "Concept." This movement towards absolute knowing does not describe an advance towards divine omniscience, but an odyssey towards subjectivity understanding the conditions of its knowing in such a way that an identity between subjective certainty and truth (reality) is achieved.⁷⁶

Hegel's thought attempts to answer a twofold challenge: it must overcome the Kantian separation between the empirical and the transcendental, while providing an adequate answer to the fundamental "Cartesian anxiety" regarding the adequacy of our concepts/representations. Hegel responds with a profound optimism regarding subjectivity's emergence into the self-conscious awareness of the justifying grounds for its certainty about the world. Moreover, according to Hegel, this emergence is necessitated by the internal logical tensions within the experience of representational structures themselves. Hence alterity, as the recognition of what remains un-reflected in the concept, is *real*, but a real moment that is overcome in the service of increased subjective transparency (self-consciousness), on the one hand, and a greater representational totality, on the other.

Today, the modern epistemological project continues, as Rorty and others have shown us, to understand knowledge as correspondence (accuracy of representation), wherein correspondence, contra Kant, describes an asymmetrical causal relation in which objects (the world) form the ontological ground for representations and not the other way around. Thus, *true* representations (knowledge) correspond to reality (objects), while *false* representations (opinion, myth) fail to accurately mirror the world. In either case, the

⁷⁶ "In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, [...] Hegel took as his fundamental theme this discrepancy between certainty and truth, between subjective intelligence and reality [...] The "introduction" to Hegel's system was to articulate this odyssey of spirit, showing how consciousness could eventually not only be certain of truth but also be truly certain—how the claim to truth justifies itself," from John Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic*. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981, 206; hereafter indicated as "OHL."

asymmetry of the relation between representations and objects is parasitic on the ontological independence of objects (realism) and the foundational self-certainty of the subject.

Before moving forward in an analysis of alterity that simply accepts either of the Kantian or Hegelian positions, it is necessary to make a critical return to the phenomenon itself.

1.5 Alterity: A Phenomenological Sketch

Ethos as “hearth” and *mores* as “customs” originally designated ways of co-existing alongside Others. Thus, at bottom, ethics and morality concerns our correct comportment towards Others. Our basic moral intuitions (as ethico-ontological pre-understandings) tell us that compassion exemplifies our ethical relatedness to the Other. Therefore, on my view, one can gain entry into the ontological structure of our proper relation to alterity by explicating the phenomenon of compassion. Consequently, the following describes a typical compassionate interaction, which highlights the complex intertwining of epistemology and ethics, empathy and alterity, identification and humility. This sketch is, in many ways, quite simple, yet I believe it offers important normative insights into what constitutes a moral encounter with the alterity of an Other:

My greeting is met with hesitant speech and downcast eyes. The tenseness in the face, the deflated posture, the heavy movements, the entire bearing of the Other speaks his sorrow. The ritual address that had asked mechanically about the Other, trails off into concerned silence. My carefree containment, my insulation within the immediacy of my projects, is shattered by the darkened demeanor of the Other. As though whipped by an icy wind, I awake. My absorption in my own agency is broken, and the full intensity of my awareness pivots toward the Other. Coming to rest on the face of my friend, my flickering attention finds renewed unity and is laid at his feet. His presence saturates my consciousness.

The ritual address is posed again, but in a manner that breaks absolutely from the first. The same words ring differently as this speech

echoes more uniquely than the original. What was only said is now spoken, what was hurled past the Other, now waits patiently before him.

Into the clearing of this address, the Other advances. He moves into the openness of the question to solicit compassion, and invites me to be alongside his anguish. He confesses his suffering and shares the conditions of his distress—his acute panic at the diagnosis of a threatening illness, his gutted pain over a lover's betrayal, his sense of desolation at the death of his father, or his swelling bitterness about an injustice that has befallen a friend. I listen. This sharing is gently unfolded as the revelation of the Other in the nakedness of his pain. Sheltered within a history of intimacy, of past confidences and fulfilled promises, the Other makes himself vulnerable. I listen. The gathering of his suffering in his narrative and the gradual emergence of his vulnerability coincide within the same event. To expose his pain is to expose himself, that is, to unfold himself in the very details of his predicament. It is to acknowledge a basic helplessness, to shatter the myth of self-sufficiency and confront the primal reality of one's dependence. Within the trust of this revelation he seeks many things: understanding, empathy, consolation, relief, support, and companionship.

Captivated, I am gradually drawn into the world summoned by his story. Together we gather around the tragic actuality of his world, the "third" about which we converse. It is here that we confront the facts of *his* passion, the solidity of *his* situation and the harsh reality of *his* burden. I am *moved* by the Other, transported beyond the contented horizons of my world and shown the tragedies belonging to his. In our solidarity, we inhabit his world.

However, while I may *belong with him*, invited by the Other into the intimacy of his circumstances, his situation cannot be disclosed as *mine*. And yet, because I want to share this with the Other, I struggle to imagine this world as my world. To care is to try, so I strive to understand, to see as far into the depth of his situation as I can. But despite my imaginative effort, I am unable to leap across the abyss that is the Other. In my struggle to identify, to understand, to know, I come to realize that I can never adopt the unique meaning that this situation holds: its true visceral significance for him. My will to know is thrown up against the sincerity of the concreteness of this realization. In the end, I remain his guest, estranged from the living density of his situation, that is, the sense that these circumstances have for him. A sense that emerges in the complex intersections of multiple histories, a meaning that can only surface within the context of his projects, his investments, his sacrifices, his values, his aspirations, and his relationships with the persons, things, and events involved.

In response to the vulnerability of his confession, "I suffer," all I can offer is the humility of the admission, "I cannot imagine what you are going through," and the sincerity of my submission, "Is there anything I can do?" From out of the depth of my incapacity to truly share the burden of his

suffering, I put my self at his disposal. Yet, all he seeks is the simple solace of my presence.

This account, which as a simple example I take to be uncontroversial, will provide a paradigmatic instance of compassion as the complex interplay between efforts aimed at identification, the experienced limits of those efforts, and the encounter with the genuine alterity of the Other, and thereby it will supply both a *touchstone* and a *leading-clue* for our subsequent analyses pertaining to ethics and the Other.

As cornerstones of our moral vocabulary, compassion, sympathy, and empathy refer to our capacity to share another's pain, to suffer alongside, with and for the Other. Consequently, the experience of genuine empathy offers the most honest articulation of the coincidence of moral obligation and alterity. Thus, the customary declaration in the face of the Other's suffering: "I cannot imagine what you are going through," reflects the limits of our identification, and therefore, the direct awareness of the alterity of the Other. It is precisely when we cannot comprehend the experience of the Other that we run headlong into the autonomy of the Other *qua* Other: the abyss is always autonomous. Our phenomenological description reveals that to share the pain of the Other does not entail that I have full access to the Other's pain, but that I share in the pain disclosed by the Other. It is never a matter of all or nothing: I cannot claim to suffer as the Other does nor that a gulf separates me from what the Other shares. The anguish that I feel *with* the Other is not a doubling, but refers to the same pain that the Other feels. I feel the pain of the Other, but not as the Other. In other words, compassion is intentional, it possesses the character of "aboutness." Its aboutness directs me to what the Other has revealed. To deny this intentionality is to deny the reality of the Other's pain as a real aspect of the world, to detach it from the concreteness of its situation, and thereby reduce it to a purely

mental state. However, the circumstances of the Other's pain are as real as the physical body that faces me. It is an objective fact that the Other has learned of his terminal disease, that his lover has betrayed him, that his father has passed away, or that the dignity of his friend has been violated. In other words, compassion is a possible mode of comportment towards the Other, because suffering is not something purely psychological, it is *how* a certain configuration of circumstances is disclosed. That is why the very act of understanding the particularity of the Other's situation is to already encounter his predicament as painful. In other words, failing to wince at the reality of these circumstances is to simply fail to understand them.⁷⁷

And yet, part of the reality of crisis is the brute fact of its *belonging* to the victim in a way that it can never belong to another. Clearly part of the impact of a crisis situation is how it is revealed to a victim as inextricably mine. But if, as I am arguing, the distress of a situation is not "inside our heads," how does it acquire its character of being-mine? When a set of circumstances is revealed as tragic, the *how* of the circumstantial revelation already includes a directedness that points out a victim as belonging to it.⁷⁸ Consequently, our basic moral gestures and practices immediately comport us toward those that are "internal" to adverse circumstances. Indeed, there would be something deeply aberrant

⁷⁷ The virtual impossibility of not entering into another's tragedy is revealed in the fact that even those methods and technologies for generating "institutional distance" within certain professions e.g., doctors, nurses, psychologists, police, firefighters, etc, provide, at best, temporary insulation from the pain of the Other. Many of the problems accompanying such professions stems from the inevitable emotional and psychological trauma of involvement with the pain of Other. As a consequence, there has been a gradual shift away from technologies for securing distance/objectivity to methods for coping with the effects of being involved in the tragedies of Others e.g., practices for grieving, increased access to counseling, etc.

⁷⁸ While I recognize that my use of "tragic" is problematic because it is rife with unintended connotations, its benefits outweigh its drawbacks. In particular, I am interested in the fact that "tragedy" connotes the sense of an objective situation out in the world (i.e., crisis), while "tragic" connotes an affective way of being-towards the situation (i.e., distress). In other words, its usefulness lies in the fact that it resists being reduced to objectivity or subjectivity.

about one who needed to consult another's mental state *in order to* determine whether he/she has been made a victim of circumstance, that is, whether the death of her child is really a tragedy for a mother or whether racism is really a tragedy for a person of colour. In other words, even the stoic can be a victim.

1.5.1 The Same

In *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, Adriaan Peperzak suggests that the language of the "Same" and the "Other" as philosophical concepts can be traced to Plato's *Sophist*, where *to auton* (the Same) and *to heteron* (the Other, the different) are presented in terms of their "irreducible nonidentity" as basic metaphysical categories.⁷⁹ But, as contemporary terms of art, the concepts of the Same and the Other are more closely associated with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the subsequent phenomenological tradition stretching from Husserl to the present.

In current phenomenological discourse, as well as in critical theory (deconstruction and post-structuralism), the language of the Same generally designates an *egology*; namely, the conversion of transcendences into immanence via processes of comprehension and appropriation by an individual ego. In his 1962 essay, "Transcendence and Height," Levinas writes, "The knowing I is the melting pot of such a transmutation. It is the Same [*La Même*] par excellence. When the Other [*L'Autrui*] enters into the horizon of knowledge, it already renounces alterity."⁸⁰ As an *egology*, the Same poses a world of familiarity, its world, a world *composed* of objects at its *disposal* and for its enjoyment.

⁷⁹ Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak, *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997, 4; hereafter indicated as "B." See 255d13-259d6 of *The Sophist* for the discussion of *to auton* and *to heteron* between the young Theaetetus and the rather appropriate figure of the Stranger.

⁸⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*. Eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley & Robert Bernasconi. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, 12; hereafter indicated as "BPW."

Ricoeur's helpful distinction in *Oneself as Another*, between identity as *idem* (sameness) and identity as *ipse* (selfhood) can help further explicate this notion of "egology" as a modality of the Same.⁸¹ By separating these two senses of identity, an egology can be defined in terms of those procedures through which *ipse* preserves itself by an ongoing recovery of *idem*.⁸² In fact, it is precisely in these terms that Hegel, describes the Truth of the Subject in the *Phenomenology* as "self-restoring sameness, or this reflection of otherness within itself."⁸³ Levinas echoes this understanding of the Same as a process of restoration and stabilization in *Totality and Infinity*: "The I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. It is the primal identity, the primordial work of identification" (TI 36/25).

However, while phenomenological discourse has taken the notion of egology as foundational, reflecting the centrality of epistemology, the simple equating of the Same with the ego as a system of immanence, ignores the cultural, political, institutional, and theoretical modalities of the Same. Consequently, my concern is not with the problem of the contact between immanence and transcendence (epistemology), but with the masking of transcendence as an ethical question.

If we return to our phenomenological account of compassion, the effort to identify (without residuum) with the Other marks the operation of the Same as an abstractly isolated moment: the Same *qua* Same. For the purposes of this discussion then, the

⁸¹ For a discussion of this distinction between identity as *idem* and as *ipse*, a distinction that is central to the argument of *Oneself as Another*, See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992, 116; hereafter indicated as "OA."

⁸² By distinguishing these two notions of identity, it is possible to consider identity in relation to temporality without falling into the mereological paradoxes associated with the classic problem of the "ship of Theseus."

⁸³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, "Preface" §18, hereafter indicated as "PhS."

"Same" does not refer to a specific ontic category, but to *any economy of forces that struggles to restore its identity by processes that either absorb or marginalize alterity*. Even in its most innocuous forms, this struggle for comprehension is a self-centered mode of being Other-directed, because it approaches the alterity of the Other as an obstacle towards self-fulfillment. Consequently, as a mode of Other-directedness, it means that sameness imposes itself between self and Other. However, inasmuch as such imperialistic tendencies of the will to truth are restrained vis-à-vis the limited capacities of the Same to *truthfully* comprehend the alterity of the Other, the efforts of the Same contribute to the founding of the moral relation. In other words, the assertion of the self-centered mode of being comes to recognize the reality of its limits and resigns itself before the radical alterity⁸⁴ of the Other. The result is that the interruption of sameness between self and Other falls away and the Same achieves a newfound sincerity in its mode of Other-directedness. In view of our phenomenological description, this mode of Other-directedness is compassion, namely, the desire to *share* rather than *comprehend* the burden of the Other.⁸⁵ Instead of confronting the alterity of the Other as an obstacle towards self-recovery (identification), this mode of Other-directedness seeks to help the Other recover himself. Consequently, the admission that "I cannot imagine what you are going through" reflects the will to truth of the Same mediated by sincerity. In the purity of its humility, the Same invites a moral relation with the Other.

But if the will to truth recoils before the density of the Other's alterity and retreats into untruth, thereby *insincerely* comprehending the Other, then the conceit of the Same

⁸⁴ The notion of "radical alterity" to which I am appealing is deflationary in the sense that it does not designate an abyss between myself and an Other, but only the recognition that at some point the Other fully outstrips my grip on her.

⁸⁵ To be sure, "comprehension" does not exhaust all the possible modes of knowing, but it has served as the ideal towards which Western epistemology strives.

undermines any possibility of a concrete moral relation. A vanity that must reduce the Other to a surface preempts any humility before the depth of the Other's alterity. The "I can" reveals itself as incapable of admitting "I cannot," hence the Same announces the condescending bad-faith assertion that humiliates the Other: "I know exactly how you feel." In this case, the Same sacrifices the moral relation in order to preserve the illusion of its self-sufficiency.

Worse still, inasmuch as the will to truth is unrestrained vis-à-vis the capacities of the Same to comprehend the Other, and thereby *willfully* acts to transgress the Other's alterity, the Same sacrifices the Other in order to preserve the illusion of its self-sufficiency. In this case, the Same violently sets upon the Other. Such willfulness, in the light of our mundane example, would most commonly manifest itself in the form of callous curiosity and a self-serving insistence that the Other yield more of himself than he feels comfortable. Unfortunately, of course, in extra-mundane situations, the will to truth can manifest itself as torture and interrogation.

In conclusion, by holding in abeyance any particular ontic assumptions about the Same, it is possible to review regimes, institutions, ideologies, practices, customs, concepts, and even living systems as varying modalities of sameness, and thereby more fully reveal the different forms of violence attending the reproduction of the Same.⁸⁶ In other words, the Same is not defined according to its "what," but according to its "how," that is, with respect to its assimilative and appropriative functions: "The possibility of possessing, that is, of suspending the very alterity of what is only at first other, and other relative to me, is the way of the same" (TI 38/27). The Same operates according to grades

⁸⁶ Similarly, Levinas points to a variety of "moments" that are integral to the restoration of identity: "the body, the home, labor, possession, economy," which are not mere contingencies, but "articulations of this structure [of the Same]" (TI 38/27).

of identification, and, as such, is essentially hostile towards difference. Its assimilative mechanisms are *totalitarian*, as its activity is governed in accordance with its machinery of identification and valuation in support of securing a totalizing view.

1.5.2 Alterity

As I have claimed above, the Other has traditionally been approached as a mode of transcendence opposing the immanence of the subject. Such analyses have started from a strong sense of subject as *cogito*, and corresponding presumptions of what is *not*-subject e.g., alter ego, objects, ideas, world, etc. However, this rigidly dualistic starting point fundamentally misconstrues the encounter with alterity from the beginning.

Rather than assume this ontological divide, I contend that "otherness" describes a particular *quality* of relatedness. In our phenomenological account of compassion, there are two moments held in tension. Firstly, there is some degree of comprehension, that is, I am made partially privy to the circumstances of the Other's suffering, and secondly, such comprehension is accompanied by the recognition that there is much that exceeds the possibility of comprehension, that is, the full concreteness of the Other's circumstances are not mine. Furthermore, the tension mediating the interplay of these two moments is of paramount importance. If the tension collapses into comprehension by the Same, the moral relationship dissolves, but if there is no understanding, the moral relationship can never emerge. Instead, alterity emerges against a background of understanding, and understanding against a background of alterity. In precise phenomenological terms, otherness/alterity is a horizontal notion, shading from the *presentation* of relative alterity on the near side as the thematically available (the Other qua Same) and the determinate, to the *intimation* of absolute alterity on the far side as the unavailable (the Other qua Other)

and the indeterminate.⁸⁷ For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to note that there are two overlapping senses in which the notion of alterity or otherness is horizontal. The first sense is phenomenologically descriptive, that is, it refers to how we experience alterity as a gradation from determinate presentation to indeterminacy at the limits of presentation. I shall refer to this first notion as the “perceptual horizon.” The second sense is methodological, that is, it refers to the non-thematic nexus of referential implications that is a transcendental feature of the process by which an object is made thematically available. More simply put, it is the way an object is given, but is never itself given. I shall refer to this second sense as the “transcendental horizon.” The notion of alterity I am presenting involves the intertwining of both horizontal modes. Roughly stated, the shading from determinacy to indeterminacy at the level of the perceptual horizon is structurally coupled with a parallel shading from the level of the thematically available (what is given) towards the level of the transcendental horizon (the way it is given).⁸⁸ In other words, as the intentional hold on the Other as thematic object deteriorates in the approach towards indeterminacy (absolute alterity), the experiential relation to the Other comes to depend on intimating the way in which the Other is disclosed.

By coping with the world we enter into identifying relations with the Other—communicate with the Other, share with the Other, feel with the Other, know the Other—and thereby engage the relativity alterity of the Other as differing, but not as different. However, through these same interactions with the Other we come to intimate the horizontal depth of the Other as exceeding availability, which not only suggests the

⁸⁷ The use of the term “intimation” rather than the conventional Husserlian vocabulary of “appresentation,” is intended to underscore the dialectical relationship between ethical interaction with relative alterity as “intimacy” and the experience of irreducible alterity as an empty (unfulfilled) intentional act.

⁸⁸ I will simply use the term “horizontal” when referring to the twofold horizontal nature of alterity.

surplus possibilities of communicating with, sharing with, feeling with, and knowing the Other, but also the autonomy of the Other as withdrawing from and exceeding these identifications. In other words, we come to confront the irreducible alterity of the Other at the penumbral limits of our encounter with relative alterity. To put it somewhat crudely, the experience of the Other can be likened to an iceberg: it is via the brightness of the surface that we adumbrate the profound depth of the Other transcending us. Moreover, it is this tensive quality experienced in the difference between comprehension and alterity, which endows alterity with the fact of its phenomenological depth. It is this concrete experience of depth that *alters* us, suspends our projects, restrains the appropriative mechanisms of the Same, and commands our respect for the dignity and autonomy of the Other. In other words, this dialectical tension reveals the unquestionable alterity of the Other, which calls us to moral responsibility.

Whereas Levinas distinguishes between “formal” alterity as belonging to the immanence of the world and “non-formal” alterity as belonging to the metaphysical Other (TI 38/28), I distinguish between relative alterity as that which stands in a relation of comprehension to the Same, and absolute alterity as that which marks the limits of that comprehension. Thus, while Levinas’ notion of formal alterity and my conception of relative alterity stand in close proximity, his insistence on absolute metaphysical transcendence separates his notion of non-formal alterity from my focus on the non-metaphysical “experience” of absolute alterity.⁸⁹ In one respect, then, it could be said that

⁸⁹ Although the idea of experiencing absolute alterity may appear contradictory within the conventional framework of discourse on alterity, it is precisely the terms and framework of that discourse that I am contesting. See section 1.6.2.2 of this chapter for a preliminary clarification as to what I mean by “experiencing” absolute alterity, but in many respects, this entire work is offered in support of this claim.

I am presenting a naturalized phenomenological model of alterity challenging Levinas' theological-metaphysical model.

1.5.2.1 Relative Alterity: the Other qua Same

Relative alterity describes the near side of the horizon of alterity in which the Other is given merely as not-I. For the most part, the analyses of classical phenomenology failed to move beyond relative alterity, because the question of the Other has been thoroughly structured according to epistemology: "What are the epistemic conditions under which an other for-itself is for me?" (HB 66). From this perspective, the Other is simply appropriated according to its mode of givenness for the economy of the Same—even if that mode of givenness is inaccessibility. At bottom, relative alterity denotes a comfortable alterity in which the Other is neither a problem nor a question for us. Instead of addressing the *face* of the Other, we strive to know only a *façade*—an *eidōs*. Thus, from the standpoint of relative alterity, the Other is a surface rather than a depth. This is not to say that we encounter a false appearance of the Other, rather it describes the two-dimensionality of an aspect lacking the horizontal depth of a more robust alterity, that is, an irreducible alterity that challenges the borders of the Same's economy. Strictly speaking, the Other *qua* Same is not the ethical Other, it is the comprehended and utilized Other: the Other contextualized by *my* projects. For example, in the phenomenological account above, the initial address that was mechanically extended to the Other confronts only his relative alterity, in spite of the fact that there may exist, at an abstract level, a *prima facie* recognition of absolute alterity. It is only in the wake of the obvious disturbance of the Other that I am called towards an eventual encounter with his absolute alterity. Indeed, the entire process of entering into the world presented by the Other is an activity of

identification, and therefore continues to represent an encounter with relative alterity. Indeed, the bulk of our everyday dealings with Others take place at the level of relative alterity. However, this does not mean that such comprehension and utilization *necessarily* transgresses the dignity of the Other. As in Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means," the moral danger lies in engaging *only* the relative alterity of the Other, and thereby failing to respect *at the same time* the Other's irreducible alterity.⁹⁰

At this junction, it is worth specifying a serious concern regarding the use of "othering" for characterizing procedures of marginalization in contemporary theory. To equate "the Other" with "the marginal" fails to consider the real alterity of the Other, because it tacitly preserves the hegemonic vision of the Same. In other words, if the Same appropriates experience in terms of grades of identification, then dismissal and devaluation occur on the basis of a logic preserving the integrity of that identity. The Same can either appropriate and valorize or appropriate and devalue, but in either case, what has been appropriated is taken up in accord with the logic of the Same.⁹¹ Hence, procedures of exclusion and

⁹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993, 36; hereafter indicated as "GMM." Although I am deeply sympathetic with the "formula of the end-in-itself," it is necessary to substitute the concrete experience of irreducible alterity for the abstract rational concept of the end-in-itself.

⁹¹ For the most part, I shall be using "appropriate" to designate the ways in which the Same forcefully assimilates alterity by reducing it to a mode of comprehension and/or possibilities for utilization according to the projects of the Same. The moral danger inherent in appropriation concerns the legitimizing of violences against the Other for the sake of the Same. Appropriation overwrites the intrinsic value of the Other with instrumental value, thereby excluding or even erasing the Other from the domain of moral considerations, which, in turn, makes the exploitation of the Other permissible. Spivak's notion of the "native informant" presented in *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason* is a good example of the way in which colonialism and neocolonialism appropriates the Other: "I think of the 'native informant' as a name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man—a mark crossing out the possibility of the ethical relation," from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996; hereafter indicated as "CPCR." In contrast to appropriation, I shall use the term

selection both function according to the same logic of identity and the same centre of value. To be "othered" is to be *displaced* and *displayed* from the standpoint of the Same as being far from its centre. Consequently, on my view, to be marginalized is to have one's alterity effaced, that is, it is to be *samed*, not othered. In contrast, I contend that moral considerability entails the recognition of the Other *qua* Other (irreducible alterity). In the next section I briefly turn to Nietzsche's analyses of *ressentiment* as instructive for further clarifying my hesitance regarding this misconceived use of "othering."

1.5.2.2 Relative Alterity and *Ressentiment*

Ressentiment, the reordering of values by reactive forces, expresses the unique will to power of the Herd (the Same). In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche documents the emergence of slave morality as just such a reevaluation according to *ressentiment*: "While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself.'"⁹² Nietzsche's characterization of the morality of the ascetic priest as "a slave morality" does not arise from a historiographical perspective concerning particular power relations, but from a genealogical analysis of the quality of the power relation itself; namely, the relation between the original freedom belonging to the affirmation of creative forces and the

"accommodation" to preserve the positive hermeneutical sense of *Aneignung*. See Ricoeur's discussion of appropriation in the essays entitled "Appropriation" and "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" in Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. According to Ricoeur, appropriation need not refer to "possession" or a "taking hold of," but in the act of understanding "implies a moment of dispossession of the narcissistic ego" (HHS 192). While I am sympathetic with Ricoeur's point, for the sake of clarity I will use "appropriation" to designate those "modes of seizure" maintaining the centrality of the Same, and "accommodation" to designate the displacement of the Same in order to "make room for" the Other. While appropriation describes a *stable expansion* to the economy of the Same, accommodation describes a *critical alteration* to the economy of the Same.

⁹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals/Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 1:10; hereafter indicated as "GM."

derivative dependence of reactive forces as negations. Nietzsche's critique focuses on the parasitic and inhibitory quality of reactive forces, which Deleuze succinctly describes, "they separate active force from what it can do" (NP 57). Thus, a slave morality does not produce a new table of values, but simply *inverts* the old morality. In other words, the Herd reassigns value in order to preserve itself against what is different (the Other, the Noble). This reassignment entails appropriating the Other through inversion (marginalization), such that what is Other becomes evil, and what is not-Other becomes good. *Ressentiment's* reevaluation of values represents a mode of totalization, what Nietzsche often refers to as a "leveling of culture," in which the Other is vilified for being not-Same.

His concern about totalization further connects Nietzsche's analyses of memory and forgetfulness with the problem of *ressentiment*. According to Nietzsche, memory describes a totalized economy wherein everything is retained, available, and already valued according to *ressentiment*. Forgetfulness, on the other hand, describes a Dionysian dissolution of boundaries, which is fundamentally antithetical to economization. Indeed, while the Herd only ever knows relative alterity, that is, deficient modes of sameness within the strict bounds of its economy, Nobility confronts the irreducible alterity of other Nobles as creative centres of value commanding respect precisely due to their robust difference.

1.5.2.3 Absolute Alterity: the Other qua Other

Absolute alterity, which is to say the Other *qua* Other, describes the appearance of the Other structurally coupled with the recognition of the inadequacy of any efforts at appropriation. In our phenomenological example, the recognition of the failure to

appropriate is, at the same time, the recognition of the alterity of the Other. Absolute alterity is encountered in the realization that no imaginative leap can transcend the abyss that is the Other. While someone like Levinas maintains that an abyss separates the self from the Other, I contend that the Other is an abyss. It is precisely in the face of this bottomless nature of the Other that I confess to him my inability to identify with his concrete condition. Moreover, it is in the wake of this interruption in the economy of the Same, in the immanent suspension of my projects, that I take responsibility for his. I place my self at his disposal, and allow the immediacy of his needs to take precedence over my own: "Is there anything I can do?"

Additionally, this conception of absolute alterity does not run the risk of ontologizing the Other, since it fails to theorize alterity in terms of any specific ontical difference e.g., gender, race, class, species, etc. Rather than pinning it to any essential property, alterity emerges from the inherent complexity of the Other, and, for certain entities, the strategies employed for deferring and avoiding comprehension and utilization. Consequently, alterity is experienced as a profound depth and/or an active resistance to appropriation. Given a non-oppressive relationship with the Other, we encounter the alterity of the Other as an inherent complexity or "depth," which is revealed as a real aspect of our interaction. In cases of subjugation, however, the Other will typically avail itself of tactics designed to provoke the recognition of alterity, that is, she will attempt to rupture her comprehension as a surface. For example, many political struggles mark a resistance to appropriation, which means that attending political strategies need to be analyzed as pointed articulations of alterity resisting appropriation and rendering alterity highly conspicuous.⁹³

⁹³ Although, a detailed analysis would go beyond the scope of this paper, I believe that the particular efficacy of Mahatma Gandhi's political interventions lie in their ability to disrupt colonial

Moreover, since alterity emerges as an aspect of relationality, any opposition to the Same is always concrete. Resistance, as an effort to avoid appropriation, *withstands* the Same. That is, the Other takes its stand and holds its place against the mechanisms of absorption and displacement by the Same. Consequently, the absoluteness of the Other does not refer to an essential substance or a metaphysical transcendence— a non-relation according to Levinas—but to a process of continual *absolution*, namely, the immanent transcending of the Other beyond the grip (*Begriff*) of the Same.

Here, the notion of radical alterity, which I am presenting, differs importantly from that of Levinas, whose notion of the absolute Other is one completely untouched by the Same:

It is other with an alterity constitutive of the very content of the other.
Other with an alterity that does not limit the same, for in limiting the same the other would not be rigorously other: by virtue of the common frontier, the other, within the system, would yet be the same. The absolutely other is the Other (TI 39/28).

While I agree with Levinas that the Other *qua* Other describes an “alterity constitutive of the very content of the other,” I fail to see that interaction with the Same contaminates

narratives maintaining the economy of the Same (the British). While such colonial representations had previously been able to appropriate the Indians as a deficient mode of being-human and being-civilized, thereby legitimating British commitments to the “white man’s burden,” these economizing narratives were collapsed under the burden of Gandhi’s compelling articulations of alterity. Indeed, it was precisely the uncanniness of Gandhi’s interventions, that is their fundamental difference from the ways of the British, which radically disclosed the robust alterity of the Indians as transcending the colonial economy representing them merely as not-quite-British. This quotation below, from one of the secretaries for General Smuts, which I have taken from Ved Mehta’s *Mahatma Gandhi & His Apostles*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, reveals the deep tension between the hateful grip of the colonial narratives and the newfound recognition of the alterity of the Indians: “I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness” (129). Note that the “sheer helplessness” of the British has nothing to do with their economic and military power; rather it characterizes their inability to sustain the narratives heretofore masking the moral considerability of the Indians. It was precisely this moral truth, the alterity of the Indians, that *satyagraha* (“the force of truth”) was intended to reveal against the concealing violences of colonialism.

such alterity. On the contrary, I contend that it is precisely through such interaction that the radical alterity of the Other indirectly reveals itself as absolution and withdraw.

Levinas' insistence that "limiting," or resisting the Same, entails being "within the system" of the Same reflects an overly static and formal logical notion of relation.

For Benhabib as well, the perspective of the concrete Other can only emerge *through* interaction: "Without engagement, confrontation, dialogue and even a 'struggle for recognition' in the Hegelian sense, we tend to constitute the otherness of the other by projection and fantasy or ignore it in indifference" (SS 168). The implications of Benhabib's claim here stand in sharp contrast to Levinas' notion of the Other. Whereas Levinas argues for a strict transcendence of the Other, Benhabib argues that without the requisite interaction for revealing the concrete differences of the Other, the Same is left to imaginatively project the viewpoint of the Other. The implication of Benhabib's view is that such a projection of the Other does more to place the Other "within the system" of the Same than confrontation or struggle. In my opinion, Levinas wrongly assumes that every form of resistance or struggle necessarily adopts a reactive posture following the logic of *ressentiment* discussed above. Unfortunately, Levinas' effort to develop a logically "radical" notion of alterity required abandoning the concreteness of ethics: the concreteness of the victim, the concreteness of suffering, and the concreteness of our moral relationships.

Finally, I want to address a systematic distinction, which Anthony Steinbock argues for in *Home and Beyond*, between the Other (Gr: *der Andere*) and the Alien (Gr: *das Fremde*). While I am convinced that it is significant, I have chosen to bracket this distinction for the purposes of this study. I will begin by reviewing Steinbock's reasons for

putting forward this distinction, and then, briefly rehearse my reasons for not maintaining it.

Steinbock argues that "*Andere*," like the English term "other" and the French term "*autre*," originally means "second." As such, he contends that "[t]he second is dependent upon the first and grounded in the first, while the first can remain independent of the second" (HB 59). From a strictly phenomenological point of view, he claims that "[t]he other is always second in first philosophy; it is a second transcendence when compared to the original transcendence of the first sphere," and as such, Steinbock argues further that such language maintains a covert relationship to Cartesian subjectivity (what he calls *first philosophy*) and a static phenomenological model of intersubjectivity, wherein the *alter ego* is one-sidedly *founded* by the ego (HB 59). In contrast, Steinbock suggests that the language of "alien" resists the reduction of a transcendent subjectivity to the *first* subjectivity, and therefore more naturally supports a generative phenomenological model of intersubjectivity as a co-founding relation. Putting it somewhat differently, he states that within the context of intersubjectivity "I will insist that the 'other' is a *logical* concept, whereas the 'alien' is an *axiological* one" (HB 59).

Again, while I am sympathetic with Steinbock, I do not find myself compelled to follow his distinction. Firstly, Steinbock's project is quite different from my own. *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* focuses on phenomenological method and its relation to intersubjectivity. More specifically, Steinbock critiques traditional models of phenomenology, both static and genetic, in order to flesh out a "generative phenomenology." Although Steinbock's shift from static and genetic phenomenology to generative phenomenology supports moving phenomenology beyond

being a purely descriptive method to “becoming a normative undertaking” (HB 4), his concern is not specifically ethical.

My central interest, on the other hand, addresses the problem of moral considerability in which the issue of the “secondness” of the relative Other is exactly the point of contention. Even more precisely, the analysis of the transfiguration of the façade of relative alterity that stands outside of moral consideration, into the revelation of the face of the absolute Other commanding moral consideration, requires confronting the moral fact that the Other *qua* Same is treated as secondary.⁹⁴

From an etymological standpoint, Steinbock focuses exclusively on the Germanic root “*anderē*” as meaning “second,” while I am interested in its relation to concepts of transformation, transfiguration, and change. For example, *ändern* means “to change, to alter,” such as *das ändert die Sache* – “that changes things, that puts a different complexion on things.”⁹⁵ The emergence of the Other *qua* Other entails precisely such a transfiguration of the Other *qua* Same, an emergence of radical alterity wherein the external relations linking Same and Other are *altered*: transformed into an ethical relationship binding Other and Other.⁹⁶ The *alteration* of the relation between Same and

⁹⁴ From quite a different perspective, I suggest that C. S. Pierce’s phenomenological category of “Secondness” offers a provocative and positive supplement to the notion of the Other as “second.” Indeed, many of Pierce’s characterizations of secondness integrate rather nicely with the ethical considerations of the Other in terms of externality, constraint, critique, and particularity. In a number of respects, Pierce’s description of secondness resonates particularly well with Levinas’ account of the Other. See “The Principles of Phenomenology” in Charles Sanders Pierce, *Philosophical Writings of Pierce*. Ed. Justus Buchler. New York: Dover, 1955; hereafter indicated as “PWP.” In this essay, Pierce variously glosses “secondness” as “that which insists upon forcing its way to recognition as something *other* than the mind’s creation” (PWP 79), as a “forcible modification of our ways of thinking” (PWP 88), and, “consciousness of an interruption into the field of consciousness, sense of resistance, of an external fact, of another something” (PWP 95).

⁹⁵ Terrell, Peter, Veronika Schnorr, Wendy V. A. Morris, & Roland Breitsprecher. Eds. *Harper Collins German Dictionary*. 2nd Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991, 30.

⁹⁶ Note that my use of the term “alteration” differs sharply from Michael Theunissen’s notion of “alter-ation” (*Veränderung*), which in many ways parallels Husserl’s concept of “alien-ation” (*Entfremdung*) as presented in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental*

Other entails a transformation from an external (instrumental) relation in which the identities of the *relata* are not put at risk, to an internal (ethical) relationship that is fundamentally constitutive of the identities of the *relata*.⁹⁷ Indeed, the strong moral expectations accompanying and regulating relationships of intimacy—trust, honesty, loyalty, etc.—reflect this transformation and the vulnerability attending it.⁹⁸

Phenomenology. Trans. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970, 184; hereafter indicated as "*Crisis*." For Theunissen, alter-ation is the negation of the "world-instituting power" of the I as the constituting centre: "The alteration that I undergo through the Other is, as alter-ation, a depotentialization in the negative sense, a disempowerment of my I" (TO 90). In this way, then, Theunissen's notion of "alter-ation" is linked to Husserl's concept of "alien-ation" in which the I as absolute "here" is reduced to a relative "there" by the objective gaze of the Other. My concept of alteration is relational, it concerns the *qualitative transformation* from a non-ethical relation to an ethical relationship.

⁹⁷ To be sure, an exploitive instrumental relation between Same and Other can change, damage, or efface the identity of the Other, but inasmuch as the relation is external neither party willingly makes themselves vulnerable, even though the Other may, and all too often is, simply overwhelmed by the violence of an exploitive relation. While it may also be the case that the Other *willingly* makes herself vulnerable in an attempt to transform the relation, which is undoubtedly an ethical act, unless such an act is responded to reciprocally, the instrumental relation has not been superseded by the ethical relationship. The qualitative differences attending the ethical relationship express a fundamental difference in the structure of the relation itself, namely a transformation from the externality of instrumental relations to the internal relations of ethical relationships, a transformation arising from mutual vulnerability and dependence.

⁹⁸ My use of "ethical relationship," rather than simply "ethical relation," marks the normative obligations and responsibilities that, on one hand, are naturally expressions of such an intrinsic relationality, and, on the other, are required to preserve, nurture, and deepen the intimacy of the relationship.

CHAPTER 2

The East and the Other: Introducing an Alternative

As variable as understandings of the “Other” have been within the Western philosophical narrative, the major systems of thought in the East—namely, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—have approached the question of the Other from a radically different perspective. Most importantly, these philosophical systems emerged as pragmatic rather than theoretical responses to the moral and existential concerns of the time.¹ While there are undoubtedly additional historical, cultural, and linguistic factors that are relevant, the resolutely pragmatic orientation shared by these three traditions clearly played a major role in ensuring that a *representational* mode of thinking did not achieve the same preeminence it did in the West. As a consequence, they avoid what Robert Solomon calls the “transcendental pretense,” with its attending epistemological pathologies that characterizes so much of Western thought.² In their own ways, and to varying degrees, Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophical approaches resist theoretical tendencies to abstract, de-contextualize, and universalize. Indeed, not only do these approaches focus on the authenticity of embedded and embodied experience over the accumulation of propositional knowledge, but they also warn of the danger of relying too heavily on concepts and theory, of chasing after the abstract at the expense of the concrete and knowledge at the expense of realization.

¹ Although, certain schools of Buddhism (e.g., the Abhidharma School) developed rather elaborate theoretical and metaphysical positions, these theoretical systems were, in fact, pragmatic responses to the living commentarial and debative traditions. Indeed, it was standard within classical Indian debates that the loser was expected to *convert* to the winners position. Moreover, since, these philosophical systems were embedded within religio-philosophical systems, there was no rupture between “theory,” on the one hand, and deep religious and existential commitments on the other.

² Robert Solomon, *The Bully Culture: Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Transcendental Pretense 1750-1850*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993.

This chapter introduces in outline Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, specifically in light of their key philosophical points of contact with the question of the Other and the “experience” of alterity. This chapter will also provide a site of contrast for the genealogical and archaeological analyses of phenomenology performed in Chapter 3, and the requisite background for appreciating the Japanese philosophical positions presented in Chapter 4.

2.1 Confucianism and Alterity

The following examines how Confucius’s “One Thread” (*yiguan* 一貫)³ structures moral responsiveness, and to what extent it can accommodate the difference of the Other. I begin by scrutinizing the dependence on analogical reasoning underpinning the One Thread, and then consider the implications of its formulation as a *proscription* rather than as a *prescription*. I conclude the analysis by turning to the constituent “moments” of the One Thread, *zhong* and *shu*, in order to clarify their dialogical relationship, and by extension, the dialogical relationship of self and Other, as co-founding and co-cultivating.

2.1.1 The “One Thread,” *Zhong* (忠), and *Shu* (恕)

In classical Confucianism, the question of the Other is essentially confronted in terms of ethical and political considerations directed towards the maximization of social harmony (和 *he*) conceived as the requisite environment for supporting the full development of the individual. Indeed, while the classical Liberalism has taken the individual agent as ontologically basic and thereby constitutive of the social group,

³ Although Confucius’s “One Thread” is often identified with the “Golden Rule,” the abstract and de-situated notion of a “rule” runs counter to the concrete emergence of Confucian morality.

Confucianism asserts that the social situation, articulated in terms of the “five-relations” (五倫 *wūlun*), is constitutive of the individual.⁴ Thus Confucianism begins from an essentially historical position, one that recognizes the fact that social context precedes the individual, namely, one is born into the relationships that orient and shape the eventual emergence of “self.” Indeed, the Confucian appreciation of cultural legacy (文 *wen*) as a cumulative social achievement requiring both conservation and advancement, reveals the degree to which classical Chinese thought understood the human individual as fundamentally dependent on its historical-cultural milieu. Consequently, understanding Confucianism and its intersection with our question of the Other, requires understanding the distinctly Confucian mechanisms for securing this social harmony. The “One Thread”—“do not do unto others as you would not want them to do unto you,” is an obvious place to begin.

Simply put, the One Thread says that I am to use myself as an analogy in my dealings with the Other. However, from our standpoint of concern with radical alterity, this moral approach is at first glance problematic, since I am using my self (the Same) as the standard by which to evaluate appropriate conduct towards the Other, which is justifiable only if I have grounds for believing that the Other is sufficiently like me.⁵ In

⁴ The five-relations essentially map the five axes of social “space,” in other words, they represent the paradigmatic relationships circumscribing the social context: father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, sibling and sibling, friend and friend. Moreover, it is important to note that these relationships do not simply service hierarchical power structures. Since the relation itself is “ontologically” primitive, it explicitly determines the implied *relata* such that each relationship already delineates reciprocal responsibilities and obligations for preserving and nurturing itself.

⁵ The epistemological justification for such analogical reasoning is more obvious in classical China due to the homogeneity of the cultural setting in contrast to a modern cosmopolis. For this reason, my approach to the One Thread via the question of radical alterity is not intended as a relevant critique of traditional Confucianism as such, but a reconstruction of an aspect of Confucian ethics for the sake of addressing this contemporary question. Moreover, because of the priority of *situation* in the classical Chinese worldview, the grounds of similarity are not simply located in the individual

some instances the Other may be sufficiently like me that such analogical reasoning turns out to be successful—by which I mean that the Other either welcomes the act, or, at the very least, does not feel unduly burdened. However, there are no grounds for believing that the Other, in any global sense, is the same, and there are no infallible means for determining, in advance, local points of sameness.⁶ Baldly stated, there is no method for knowing when the Other may not be willing to suffer what I take to be unproblematic. Since our ethical reasoning needs to be consequentialist to some degree, that is, our evaluation of an act as moral depends on the goodness or badness of its actual results and not solely on the grounds for acting, such a lack of confidence in our ethical reasoning is rather unsettling. Moreover, from a non-consequentialist concern with safeguarding the *dignity* of the Other in terms of her irreducible alterity, there is still more cause for unease.

However, the One Thread actually offers a more sophisticated approach to alterity. Firstly, any robust form of analogical reasoning requires that due attention be given to relevant *differences* as well as relevant similarities. Hence, the analogical consideration involved in the realization of the One Thread necessarily entails an implicit recognition of difference, and is not the mere substitution of one instance for another.⁷ Indeed, its negative formulation as a *proscription* rather than as a *prescription* represents an effort at

abstracted from any concrete context, but must comprehensively include the particularities of the individual and the particularities of the lived situation. Thus, in at least one sense, the idea of “putting yourself in the *place* of the Other” more aptly maps on to the background assumptions of Chinese thinking, than it does Western liberal tendencies of abstracting an agent from her context of action.

⁶ Now it is true that one can always ask the Other in order to discover how she feels about the proposed act, but the availability of this route makes the need for such analogical considerations somewhat moot.

⁷ I use the term “analogical consideration” in the explicit context of the One Thread, rather than “analogical reasoning,” because the language of “reasoning” suggests that the process is a purely cognitive act, and thereby fails to include its affective and moral components. In contrast, I believe that the language of “consideration” more fully captures the holistic integration of the thoughtful, emotive, and moral factors involved. Moreover, the notion of reasoning carries the implication of taking a high-order theoretical stance vis-à-vis the situation, when, in actuality, most of our moral interactions occur in a pre-theoretical mode of coping with each other.

preserving the subtlety of its moral guidance, and helps guard against the moral dangers involved in too crude an understanding. The force of its negative formulation is threefold:

1) it demands a posture of moral caution, 2) it extends to the Other the same moral consideration we give ourselves, and 3) it provokes self-reflection.

As quintessentially practical beings, our struggle to realize our will in the world defines our existence. Our endeavours gather inertia as new projects sprout from the culmination of past projects in such a way that means-to-ends relationships come to internally regulate our purposive conduct. Phenomenologically speaking, the continuity of our activity is only disrupted by an action becoming either *pragmatically conspicuous*, that is we run into unexpected problems and must either rethink our means or establish new ends, or *ethically conspicuous*, that is we discover, or are informed, that our present project poses some threat to an Other.⁸ In each case, our instrumental bearing with its attending appropriation of the world as “resource” is interrupted, and our typical occupation with “doing” is momentarily arrested. Thus, while re-formulating the One Thread into a prescription does not, from a strictly logical perspective, affect its semantic content, its distinctly prohibitive force becomes significant within the contingent fact of our concrete existential context. As limiting rather than licensing our actions, the One Thread secures a *pause* in our projects and marks any context of action involving an Other as moral territory. Thus by running against the accustomed inertia, the One Thread generates a heightened vigilance with respect to the imposition of our will on the Other.

⁸ My use of the term “conspicuous” (*auffällig*) in characterizing the break in the inertia of our projects is intended to evoke Heidegger’s analysis of conspicuousness in §16 of *Being and Time*. But while Heidegger and the “classical” pragmatists like William James and John Dewey focused on the way in which “reflection” is the consequence of our encounter with a problem—which is really my notion of an act being made “pragmatically conspicuous,” none of them considered how the Other can throw us back onto our reflective heels, and thereby render a situation “ethically conspicuous.”

Secondly, within the above break in our activity, the One Thread ensures that the Other enjoys at least the same degree of importance as the self. In other words, rather than demanding that the Other recognize the value of my projects, the integrity and autonomy of the Other's projects acquire the value I place on mine: the more I value my own projects, the more I must recognize and protect the Other's. However, this is not a conventional model of reciprocity, wherein I can demand that the Other must recognize my projects *because* I have recognized hers. Rather, any demand that the Other recognize my projects can only originate with the Other, because the specific mechanism of the One Thread only works to disrupt the habitual centrality of the self as the ultimate locus of value. By disrupting the economy of the self and recognizing the parallel value of the Other's projects, the practical import of the One Thread is that, from the perspective of the first person, I am ideally responsible for *harmonizing* these two centres of value rather than *hierarchically ordering* them.⁹

Thirdly, the One Thread forces the self to reflect on the appropriateness of its desires in light of the Other, which introduces the Other's voice into my critical self-understanding. By throwing my self back on itself in order to reflect on the value of its projects, the One Thread continually socializes our projects, and thereby provokes our accountability to and responsibility for Others. Indeed, such a doubling back between my self and the Other folds into my moral perspective, such that I begin to stand outside my self in order to ask, "What am I as the Other unwilling to suffer?"

⁹ I am assuming here that the projects of the Other fall within the bounds of acceptability governing the entire Confucian tradition. What this means is that my encounters with an Other are never simply dyadic, but occur against a background defined by a vast plurality of Others i.e., the ancestors, the sages, etc. Thus, my responsibility is never focally isolated, but dispersed across an entire continuum of value-centres. Moreover, from the standpoint of the community and tradition rather than the first person point of view, it is more accurate to say that we are responsible for successfully harmonizing the multiple centres of value.

The full dimensionality of this stretching of accountability from my self to the Other is articulated through the key notions of *zhong* 忠 and *shu* 恕, which represent the two poles of Confucius's "One Thread":

The Master said, "Zeng, my friend! My way (*dao* 道) is bound together with one continuous strand [*yiguan*]. Master Zeng replied, "Indeed." When the Master had left, the disciples asked, "What was he referring to?" Master Zeng said, "The way of the Master is doing one's utmost [*zhong*] and putting oneself in the other's place [*shu*], nothing more."¹⁰

Zhong, which is often rendered as "conscientious," means "to do one's best with all of the particular resources at one's disposal." In *Thinking Through Confucius*, David Hall and Roger Ames supplement D. C. Lau's insights concerning the meaning of *zhong*:

It is because exhausting oneself [*jin ji*] means *zhong* that *zhong* has the import of "having integrity" [*you cheng*]. That is, *zhong* means "doing one's best" or "giving of oneself fully" to the task-at-hand. Taking Lau's clarification one-step further, the "oneself" in this definition of *zhong* is one's unique particularity.¹¹

If we examine the actual character of *zhong*, we see that the first radical, *zhong* 中, refers to the "centre" or "mean," while the base radical *xin* 心 denotes the "heart-mind." Taking the two together, it is possible to understand *zhong* as a distinct quality belonging to actions that manifest the depth of one's character.¹² Thus, the primary moral weight of *zhong* is *sincerity* (*cheng* 誠) as constitutive of self-realization and social harmony. *Zhong* requires a profound sincerity about my self as the analogical model used to appreciate the

¹⁰ Section 4:15 of Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*. Trans. Roger T. Ames & Henry Rosemont, Jr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1998, 92; hereafter indicated as "Analects" followed simply by the appropriate section numbers.

¹¹ David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1987, 285; hereafter indicated as "TTC."

¹² To be sure, this conception of "character" reflects a relational notion of self wherein my characteristic dispositions are not simply located within the bounds of my skin so-to-speak; rather, they are inextricable from the concrete interpersonal relationships that comprise my world.

desires of the Other and to evaluate my actions vis-à-vis the Other in any realization of the One Thread. Thus, *zhong* is crucial for avoiding self-deception, particularly the tendency to retreat into an abstract relation to an action, an action that the Other must concretely suffer. Hence, Confucius tells us, "The ancients were loath to speak because they would be ashamed if they personally did not live up to what they said" (*Analects* 4:22). Notice that once again the Confucian emphasis is on moral caution. Rather than focusing solely on an immovable will to realize one's word, Confucius directs us towards a heightened vigilance and humility with respect to aligning our moral commitments with our moral ability. Thus, "to do one's best" involves resolve, but a resolve mediated by a realistic assessment of what I am capable of actually achieving. In this way, the ethical cultivation of *zhong* aims at refining moral skill, while constantly undercutting the egoism of moral righteousness.

In his book *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, Tu Wei-ming speaks to the requisite cultivation of sincerity needed for authentically realizing the One Thread: "The Confucian Golden Rule, 'Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you,' does not simply mean that one should be considerate to others; it also means that one must be honest with oneself."¹³ Consequently, Tu argues that moral growth within the Confucian tradition is not only about *broadening* the self to include wider circles of relatedness, but requires a concurrent *deepening* of the self in order to properly sustain these extended relationships.

There is no question that Confucius takes *shu* to be fundamental for understanding moral conduct. Indeed, when asked whether there was one word characterizing moral

¹³ Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985, 56; hereafter indicated as "Con.T."

action, Confucius offers *shu* and unpacks its content in terms of the One Thread: “Zigong asked, ‘Is there one expression that can be acted upon until the end of one’s days?’ The Master replied, ‘There is *shu* 恕: do not impose on others what you yourself do not want’” (*Analects* 15:24). Here, Confucius’ explication clearly reveals *shu* as a concern with the well being of the Other. The character *shu* 恕 is comprised of the element *ru* 如 meaning “like,” “similar,” “akin,” etc., and the base radical *xin* 心 (“heart-mind”), which makes it clear to see how *shu* includes the notion of moral analogy: “like heart-mind.”¹⁴ Hall and Ames suggest that the concept of “deference,” which includes the everyday ritualized patterns of respectful behavior typical of classical Chinese culture, as well as exceptional acts of altruism and self-sacrifice, comes close to capturing the significance of *shu*. This understanding of *shu* as rooted in deference not only coheres with the understanding of the One Thread developed above, but is further supported by Confucius’ description of the “exemplary person” (*junzi* 君子) as accommodating or harmonizing: “Exemplary persons seek harmony [和] not sameness [同], while petty persons seek sameness and are not accommodating [和]” (tr. mod., *Analects* 13:23). This passage is important for three reasons. One, it provides an important corrective for understanding that the One Thread is not predicated on identification and the assimilation of the Other into the Same. Two, it underscores the fact that a sincere recognition of difference constitutes the phenomenological posture for acts of genuine deference and the establishment of social

¹⁴ It is significant that both *zhong* and *shu* contain the primitive *xin* 心, which underscores the significance of “feeling” as guiding the analogical considerations of the One Thread. Secondly, Hall and Ames observe, in a footnote, that “*ru* 如 is also used as the second person pronoun: ‘you’” (*TTC* fn. 86, 350).

harmony; and three, which is really a consequence of the first two, that an arrogant pretense towards identification is a form of aggression undermining the realization of social harmony. Hall and Ames' discussion of the relationship between *shu* and humility sustains this reading:

Patterns of deference require that 'humility' characterize social interactions, where humility is understood as the appropriate sense of one's relevance in a given context of experiencing (TTC 180).

Furthermore, Hall and Ames detail how an appropriate deferential encounter with the Other engenders the phenomenological emergence of multiple loci of value, thereby overcoming alienation while avoiding identification:

Deference is *ec-static* in the sense that it leads one to experience in and through another. The object of one's deference experiences *en-statically*, experiences him or herself as a locus of value. Artificial, conventional, or otherwise insincere acts of deference result in alienation" (TTC 181).

Such an authentic act of deference involves the revelation of the Other as a "locus of value" from two sides; namely, for-the-Self and for-the-Other, which means that the Other is both *recognized* from without and *empowered* from within. Moreover, by raising the possibility of "artificial, conventional, or otherwise insincere" deferential gestures as corrosive of interpersonal relations, Hall and Ames direct us back to *zhong* as nourishing acts of *shu*.

Through deference and humility, the Other comes to occupy a central role in the realization of moral skill. In other words, the Other is always a positive occasion for moral growth: "When you meet persons of exceptional character think to stand should to shoulder with them; meeting persons of little character, look inward and examine yourself" (*Analects* 4:17). On the one hand, the Other can appear as a moral exemplar to be deferred to and emulated in the way that an apprentice emulates the skill of a master,

while on the other, the Other may appear as morally unskilled, which recalls our own humility and occasions inner reflection rather than self-righteous indignation. This inward examination of *zhong* accomplishes two things. Firstly, self-righteousness as Other-directed censure does nothing to further one's own moral cultivation, whereas inner scrutiny continues the ongoing project of realizing moral skillfulness. Furthermore, self-righteousness as mere negation abdicates responsibility for the Other's moral growth because it lacks moral content with respect to the creative possibilities for skillful response. To simply condemn another's actions as inappropriate provides no insight into what range of behaviour is, or would have been, appropriate. The internal review of one's own moral resources opens up the possibility of an imaginative and edifying reply. Secondly, self-righteousness risks fracturing social harmony, and thereby poisoning the soil of moral growth for the entire community, while self-critique initiates behavioural strategies preserving and contributing to social harmony.

Zhong and *shu* do not denote independent virtues, rather they are two modes of manifesting "authoritative humaneness" (*ren* 仁).¹⁵ From an etymological standpoint, the homophone *ren* 人, meaning "human being," "person," "*homo*," constitutes the primary meaning of *ren* 仁, while the radical *er* 二, representing the number "two," qualifies its

¹⁵ My translation of *ren* as "authoritative humaneness" is an attempt to synthesize Ames and Rosemont's philosophical insights into the deep creativity and profound influence that attend to the patterns of behaviour *authored* by the person of *ren*, with its affective-moral dimension that is emphasized in more traditional translations of *ren* as "humaneness," "benevolence," "kindness," etc. Consequently, on my view, it is precisely the novel possibilities for articulating humaneness—with all of its cultural, affective, and moral overtones—actualized by the person of *ren* that are the source of authority. My concern with *ren* as "authoritative person" is that it places the emphasis on person, and thereby provokes a question similar to the one raised by Plato in the *Euthyphro*: "Is something pious because the God's say it is pious, or do the God's say something is pious because it is pious?" I contend that the authority of a particular pattern of behaviour is a quality of the *pattern* itself respective to a domain, which reflects the profound appropriateness of an action within a particular situation, and not the authority of the *person* performing the act.

meaning. According to Hall and Ames, who point to the authority of the *Mencius* and the *Zhōngyōng*, *ren* 仁 does in fact mean *ren* 人, except that the two terms mark a *qualitative* difference between the cultivated and uncultivated person.¹⁶ If we take Confucius' One Thread as a key to understanding *ren* 仁, the significance of the addition of *er* 二 points to the fact that the cultivated self has been deepened and broadened in and through its social relations with Others, which is to say that *zhong* is realized through *shu*. Thus, while *zhong* and *shu* can be distinguished in terms of their directedness, they share a basic coordination in the concept of *ren*. Indeed, while *zhong* intends towards the self, it carries with it our relation to Others, which is evidenced by the fact that *zhong* has evolved to signify "loyalty." Similarly, although it maintains a principal orientation towards the Other, if we recall that *shu* is an encapsulation of the One Thread, then its concrete realization entails a cultivated sense of self-understanding. As correlatives, *zhong* and *shu* circumscribe the relational field wherein self and Other as co-determining processes realize *ren*. Thus, moral cultivation describes a process in which self and Other mutually exhibit *ren* within concrete moral situations buoyed up by *zhong* and *shu*. Tu Wei-ming describes, from the side of the self, how an increasingly robust moral appreciation of self and Other is just such an enacted process: "I acquire an appreciation of myself through genuine communication with the other; as I know more of myself, I apprehend more of the other" (*Con.T* 58). The relationship between these various concepts is further elucidated in this key section from the *Analects*:

¹⁶ See pp 110-125 of *Thinking Through Confucius* for an excellent discussion on the etymology of *ren* 仁, as well as its intersection with other key Confucian concepts.

Persons of *ren* establish [立] others in seeking to establish themselves and promote [達] others in seeking to get there themselves. To appreciate [譬] others with what is near at hand can be said to be the method of becoming *ren* (tr. mod., *Analects* 6:28).¹⁷

As D. C. Lau suggests, this passage details a “methodology for *ren*,” in terms of *zhong*, *shu*, and the One Thread.¹⁸ Of particular importance is the explicit presentation of the mutual refinement of *zhong*, given here as “establishing one’s own character,” and *shu*, establishing “the character of others” typical of *ren*. Moreover, it explicates analogically approaching the Other via the One Thread, in terms of drawing on what is “near to oneself” (*zhong*) for the sake of appreciating the Other (*shu*).¹⁹ But, once again, the cultivation of *ren* should not be understood as a monological movement from *zhong* to *shu*, but as a dialogical mutual transformation through which both aspects of *ren* acquire their depth. Thus, the starting point for moral cultivation is not to be found in either *zhong* or *shu* per se, but in the movement from passively receiving cultural expectations of *zhong* and *shu*, to actively authoring novel forms of *zhong* and *shu* that reflect one’s personal history of internalization.

To summarize, the Confucian tradition provides an account of moral skill that recognizes a deep dependency of the self upon the Other. More specifically, it teaches

¹⁷ I translate the character 譬 as “appreciate” in the sense that modeling oneself on the Other involves esteeming, appraising, and understanding the Other from one’s position (see Chapter One, fn. 43). To understand 譬 as “judge” as some translator’s do (e.g., Wing-Tsit Chan, ed., *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*. Trans. Wing-Tsit Chan. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, 31; hereafter indicated as “SCP.”), suggests a presumptive superiority of the Same over the Other; a presumption that compromises the very possibility of a fruitful encounter.

¹⁸ D. C. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*. Chinese Classics: Chinese-English Series. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982, xiii.

¹⁹ While, in a general sense, *ren* describes an elevated quality of personhood, the quality itself is specifiable as a deeply moral mode of Other-directedness. Thus, while Tu Wei-ming points to two distinct clusters of meaning comprising *ren*, both of these “semiotic foci” directly concern one’s relation to the Other “(1) as the tender aspect of human feelings, namely, love and (2) as an altruistic concern for others, and, thus as a mature manifestation of humanity” (CT 84).

that skillfulness entails an ongoing moral harmonization of multiple centres of value, rather than a unification of value-centres, either through a reduction to a single value-ground or the synthesis into a single value-aggregate. Consequently, we can re-construe the claim of Hall and Ames regarding the Chinese commitment to “aesthetic ordering” (*ars contextualis*) over “hierarchical ordering” (*ontologia generalis*) as a resolute moral commitment to alterity.

2.2 Daoism and Alterity

I begin by clarifying the sense in which *xuandao* (玄道) presents a radical notion of alterity, by contrasting the Daoist attention to *dao* as Other with the Confucian focus on human Others. I argue that *dao* represents a horizontal notion stretching from intelligible construals of the world, on the near side, to the very limits of the possibility of construal, which is to say the alterity of the world, on the far side.

In the following section, I examine *xuande* (玄德) as a uniquely ethical posture vis-à-vis alterity, namely, a posture of deference towards the irreducible otherness of a situation (*xuandao*). As part of my analysis of *xuande*, I explicate how Daoist revisions to our everyday notions of knowing, desiring, feeling, and acting disrupt the reproductive mechanisms of the Same, and thereby cultivate a heightened sensitivity towards alterity. Finally, I examine Zhuangzi’s advocacy of “uselessness” as a uniquely Daoist strategy for securing the autonomy of the Other against the assimilative powers of the Same.

2.2.1 *Xuandao* 玄道 and Alterity

Most commentators agree that, within the Chinese philosophical tradition, Daoism marks a highly original critical response to Confucianism. As the dominant cultural-

philosophical backdrop, Confucian discourse frames the primary concerns of Chinese consciousness. Thus, understanding Daoism entails, at least in part, recognizing *how* Daoism functions as a response. I hold that locating and differentiating the principal sources of alterity shaping the two traditions, provides a fruitful course for exposing the substantive philosophical divergence between the Confucian and Daoist perspectives.

In the Confucian tradition, the question of the Other is always a question of relatedness to *human* Others, which is evidenced by Confucius' statement: "We cannot run with the birds and beasts. Am I not one among the people of this world? If not them, with whom shall I associate?" (*Analects* 18:6). Given the basic presuppositions structuring the cultivation of personhood within Confucianism, the sole priority of the human Other is neither inconsistent nor surprising.

In contrast, however, the primary and defining source of alterity in Daoism is *dao* (道) itself. The *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi* texts stress the elusiveness, inexhaustibility, and ineffability of *dao*, or, in the terminology of this study, the irreducible alterity of *dao*. The repeated characterizations of *dao* as nameless (無名), elusive (惚), vague (恍), dim (冥), quiet (窈), deep (深), distant (遠), indefinite (混), dark (洞), silent (寂), boundless (寥), nebulous (恍), obscure (幽), etc., convey the deep alterity of *dao*.

In particular, the character 玄 (*xuan*), meaning "darkness, secrecy, mystery, profundity," appears frequently in the *Lao-Zhuang* texts in order to emphasize the alterity of *dao*. For example, the first chapter of the *Daodejing* describes *dao* as the "mysteries of mysteries" (玄之又玄), while chapter six depicts *dao* as "mysteriously feminine" (玄牝)—a characterization that not only implies *dao*'s creative or reproductive capacities, but also

invokes the deep alterity of the feminine within the tradition. The persistent linkage in the *Lao-Zhuang* texts between *dao* and the feminine functions to underscore the sense in which *dao* is the hidden Other upon which the presence of the Same depends. Thus, the valourization of the feminine within the Daoist tradition works to reveal the dependency of the manifest (masculine) upon the hidden (feminine). Moreover, this notion of *xuan* extends to describe the sage's basic comportment as *xuande* (玄德 "profound and mysterious virtue").

While Confucius and his followers strive to realize concrete manifestations of "social harmony" (*he* 和) against a background comprised of "ritual propriety" (*li* 禮), "cultural legacy" (*wen* 文), and "sacred bestowal" (*tian* 天), the Daoist is interested in manifesting a "cosmological harmony" by attuning to nature and *dao*.²⁰ For the Confucian,

²⁰ My translation of *tian* 天 as "sacred bestowal" is clearly heterodox in light of the customary translation of *tian* as "heaven(s)." However, as other "heretical" thinkers have suggested—most notably David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking from the Han*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1998; hereafter indicated as "TFH"—the translation of *tian* as "heaven(s)" reflects an unwarranted obedience to the classical lexicons, which, at worst, bear the mark of specific ideological agendas, and, at best, reproduce the pre-critical suppositions of a foreign worldview. On my reading, while *li*, *wen*, and *tian* all describe repositories of meaning that are always and already ahead of oneself, it is possible to understand their interrelationship in terms of levels of articulation and veneration. While *li* circumscribes the highest level of articulated significance, it also represents the most mundane order of meaning. *Wen* provides a less determinate meaning-context, but elicits a deeper sense of reverence. Finally, since *tian* extends across the horizon of remote cultural history e.g., the ancestors and sages, and includes geographical, climactic, and topographical features, it denotes the widest, most indeterminate, and most sacred ambiance of significance. Thus, while *tian* is always human relevant, it straddles the culture-nature divide, because of the recognition that the natural order is formative of human affairs. Moreover, the sense of destiny/fate associated with *tian* does not describe a predetermined teleological order, but those primitive aspects of our situation, including the physical environment and cultural precedent (*gu* 故), defining the bounds of our spontaneity. Thus, the sage's extraordinary access to *tian* and enlarged efficacy does not involve "tapping" a transcendent order, but is explained in terms of a cultivated attention to the remote constraints of a situation and a developed capacity for capitalizing on these constraints. The concrete image of "sky" associated with *tian* speaks to the distance, scope, elevation, and indeterminacy associated with *tian*'s sources of meaning. By rendering *tian* as "sacred bestowal," my intention is to integrate 1) the sense in which *tian* represents the broadest scope of fact-value constituting the human situation as *given*, and 2) its positive implications as a deep reservoir of

the natural world becomes significant to the extent that it is conterminous with human projects. According to Confucius, nature and *dao* realize their full value through human beings: "It is a person who is able to broaden the way (*dao* 道), not the way that broadens the person" (*Analects* 15:29). The Daoist reverses this priority, such that human beings realize their "virtus" (*de* 德) by attuning to *dao*. Although the Daoist and Confucian agree on the priority of situation for constituting meaningful action, they disagree on how a given context ought to be construed.²¹ According to the Daoist critique, the Confucian reliance on an anthropocentric worldview organizes a situation myopically, filtering out any elements not anticipated by human interests, desires, values, etc., as mere "noise," thereby concealing the full richness of a situation. Thus, while the Confucian remains guided from within (*fangnei* 方内) an anthropocentric worldview, the Daoist steps beyond (*fangwai* 方外) the world of human-centred values and representations. This distinction, however, does not commit the Daoist to a form of transcendence, but simply to a wider notion of situation than the Confucian recognizes. Indeed, it is with telling irony that the *Zhuangzi* has Confucius confessing to Zigong, who has been taken aback by a gross display of impropriety by Masters Mengzi Fan and Qin Zhang, that "they are the sort that roam

meaning with extremely long-term and far-reaching influence, which therefore is identified as being sacred. Indeed, Hall and Ames point to the connection between *shen* 神, meaning "human spirituality and divinity" and its etymological source *shen* 伸, which means to "prolong, extend, stretch," (*TFH* 242), which reflects this linkage between distant efficacy and the divine.

²¹ The concept of "situation" to which I am appealing does not merely describe a qualitatively barren "state of affairs" demarcating a "location," but must be taken to include the *quality* belonging to the inscribed order of a particular state of affairs. Indeed, in many respects, the sense of situation I am recommending is virtually synonymous with the notion of *order*. This richer sense of "situation" is necessary, because the Chinese concept of *dao* (道) includes both a sense of "place" as it refers to "path," but since a path is not distinguishable from its directedness, *dao* also describes an inherent "order." Thus, the notion of "construal" will be important for articulating not only *what* is revealed within a situation, but more importantly, *how* it is disclosed.

beyond [方外] the guidelines," while he (Confucius) continues to "roam within [方内] the guidelines."²² Here, "realm" refers to the cultural history in which "ritual propriety" (*li*) acquires its justification as appropriate behaviour. An action's propriety arises from its context, which, for the Confucian, is a highly articulated cultural narrative effectively mapping a range of acceptable actions with a corresponding array of situations. Consequently, *fangnei* and *fangwai* are best understood as denoting the directions to which the Confucian and Daoist look for guidance. Whereas the Confucian turns within the cultural repertoire for the necessary resources to construe his situation, the Daoist looks beyond the walls of culture to the processes of nature (*ziran*), which she takes as offering a wider perspective for determining an appropriate response. Thus, while Zigong appeals to a cultural memory of ceremony and social convention, Mengzi Fan and Qin Zhang appeal to the processes of transformation (*wuhua* 物化) belonging to the broader context of nature, in order to celebrate the death (transformation) of their companion, Sang-hu. Hence, Confucius explains to Zigong that "men forget each other in the intimate attunement to *dao*" (trans. mod., CT 90), which means simply that such an attunement to the field of *dao* "gets underneath" the reflective distance intrinsic to conventional modes of human existence.

And yet, this primacy given to nature and *dao* over the trappings of culture does not betray a simple-minded allegiance to one side of a culture-nature opposition. Rather, Daoism insists that culture is embedded in nature, therefore any full-fledged response needs to reach beyond the borders of the cultural sphere in order to be responsible to the natural world. To put it rather bluntly, an action may be an exemplary response within the

²² Zhuangzi. *Chuang-tzu*. Trans. A. C. Graham. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981, 89; hereafter indicated as "CT."

confines of the cultural setting, but, because the cultural sphere depends on the natural world, if an action is irresponsible from the standpoint of sustaining the natural environment, then it is also culturally irresponsible. Ideally, the actions of the Daoist attempt to align the specific needs of culture (take for example the *Daodejing's* attention to politics) with the needs of nature in such a way that to satisfy one is to satisfy the Other.

Moreover, by continually widening the contextual frame, a situation can never be an object for intellection or ritualized response. Hence, the *Daodejing's* opening claim that any attempt to represent *dao* already misses the mark: "The *dao* that can be spoken about is not the ongoing (恆) *dao*" (*Daodejing* §1).²³ Any representation of *dao* abstracts a momentary or micro-context from the emergent unfolding of the macro-context. Consequently, the Daoist does not rely on ritual, but spontaneously and creatively copes with each situation as its significance spills over into wider contexts:

While, for Confucius, the focus of model emulation lies within the parameters of human community, the Daoist establishes what we might term "the grand analogy," describing the appropriate attitude of the sage in precisely those terms used to characterize *dao* (TFH 172).²⁴

The impossibility of representing *dao* is, at bottom, a consequence of the Daoist commitment to radical immanence.²⁵ By appealing to analogous past situations in order to mediate his response, the Confucian achieves a relative historical transcendence from the

²³ I have chosen to translate *chang* 恆 as "ongoing" rather than as "eternal," "absolute," "constant," or even "enduring," because such notions introduce metaphysical presuppositions that subvert the basic thrust of the text. Concepts such as "eternal" or "constant" belong to a substance metaphysics, while the *Daodejing* articulates a world in process. Thus, in this context, *chang* does mean "constancy" in the sense of permanence, rather, it points to the fact that, regardless of our distinctions, *dao* continues to unfold. Translations of the *Daodejing* are my own.

²⁴ The intimate relationship between *dao*, "the Grand analogy," and *de*, "the appropriate attitude of the sage," is clarified in the following section.

²⁵ My use of "immanence" and "transcendence" is simply a heuristic device for drawing a distinction between Daoism and Confucianism, and is not meant to imply the metaphysical backgrounds of Platonism-Aristotelianism, Judeo-Christian theology, or phenomenology.

present immediacy of the situation. The Daoist, on the other hand, responds directly to the contour of the immanent situation without abstract mediation, because she recognizes that she can never occupy a transcendent standpoint outside of *dao*. The insistence on the “boundlessness” (寥) of *dao* is a direct reflection of this refusal to circumscribe and objectify it. This does not mean, however, that each situation is simply equivalent to the total situation and therefore ultimately the same, since the Daoist commitment to radical immanence ensures that every situation emerges as a unique construal by a concretely embedded and embodied perspective.

Thus, unlike “metaphysical” approaches to the Other, the alterity of *dao* is not a problem of separation, but a problem of comprehensiveness: one can never stand outside of the order to be articulated. Rather than trying to objectify *dao*, the sage maintains a spontaneous and attentive molding of herself according to the felt dimensionalities of an immanent order. She “feels” *dao* from the inside, rather than trying to “view” it from the outside. For example, I do not know where I am in my home by appealing to an external representation of the structure and then locating myself within that representation, rather I orient myself from *within* my environment. Similarly, the sage takes her guidance from the internal contours of the developing situation.

Laozi explains how the various *situational levels*, broadly conceived, are nested, and how each level receives its order from a more comprehensive context: “Human beings mold (法) themselves after earth (地). Earth molds itself after *tian*. *Tian* molds itself after *dao*. And *dao* molds itself after that which is (*ziran* 自然)” (*Daodejing* §25).²⁶ The

²⁶ I translate 法 as “mold,” rather than “model,” to highlight the fact that it is a matter of responding to an order from within a situation and not simply a matter of replicating one’s situation. The

significance of this account lies in the fact that *dao* marks the liminal horizon of intelligible construal; a shading from resources providing a determinate sense of *how* things stand here and now (地) towards a sheer indeterminacy of the fact *that* they are (自然). It is for this reason that *xuandao* as the “mysteriously feminine” (玄牝) is called the “root” (根) of *tian* and earth and described as “faintly visible, seeming as if it were there (緜緜若存)” (*Daodejing* §6). Or §21, in which *dao* is described as “elusive” (惚), “vague” (恍), “quiet” (窅) and “dim” (冥), which is to say minimally determinate, and yet within this vague field one can still intimate “shapes” (象), “things” (物), and a primordial “vitality”(精). And in §40, we learn that particulars arise as the particulars they are within a determinate horizon that in turn emerges against a vague background of indistinctness: “The myriad things of the world arise (生) from determinateness (有), and determinateness arises from indeterminacy (無)” (*Daodejing* §40).

Hence, “earth” signifies the immediate and highly-determinate setting (cultural, geographical, etc.) in which day-to-day existence plays itself out, while *tian* signifies a more distant historical and less determinate natural legacy that has shaped, and continues to condition, earth. Similarly, *tian* has emerged as a gradual sedimentation of efficacious responses to the ways (*dao*) that things are (*ziran*). In other words, this hierarchy orders the *definitiveness* of our received interpretations of the world, which is to say our pre-

suggestion of water (via the water radical), which receives the order of its container, provides a concrete exemplar of this notion.

understandings of how the world is.²⁷ For the Daoist, one cannot experience the simple fact ~~that~~ things are, because we always encounter *how* things are, which is why *ziran* presences as *dao*. Thus, *ziran* is not a noumenal domain beyond intelligibility, but describes the frontier of indefinite and unarticulated experience—the “boundlessness” (參) of *dao* at the limits of the very possibility of construal—lying at the margins of cultural sense. Hence, the highly determinate horizon of earth gradually shades into the less structured horizon of *ziran*, wherein *dao* marks the limits of our ability to discern how things stand. There simply comes a point wherein a finite perspective can no longer divine the order of the vast situation.²⁸ The indeterminate flux of *ziran* provides for radical novelty and genuine spontaneity within experience by rupturing reified construals of “how things are” (the Same). In short, *ziran* marks the open-ended source of inarticulate experience (alterity) on which innovative construals of experience gain traction. By disrupting the simple reproduction of the Same, *ziran* opens up a space of freedom in which particulars can spontaneously unfold themselves within a margin of independence with respect to the Same. Consequently, rather than denoting discrete *ontological* levels, these various situational fields describe levels of *determinateness* with respect to the possibility of construing a situation. Crudely put, most people are familiar with their proximate context, a few can discern the mandates of *tian*, but it takes a sage to intimate *dao* and glean something of the complexity, vastness, and subtlety of *ziran*.

²⁷ By “definitive” here, I am referring to the *distinctness* of these interpretations and to the attending pre-critical *conviction* that makes it possible for these pre-understandings to shape our experience.

²⁸ Note that this notion of totality should not be understood as referring to a “closed” system, but simply to the aggregate of creative processes constituting *ziran* as an open-ended and continually developing situation.

We are now in a better position to see that *fangnei* (方内) and *fangwai* (方外) do not mark an inside-outside dualism. Rather, we can understand *fangnei* as being “inwardly directed,” which describes the Confucian focus on culture (文 *wen*) and *tian* as having already supplied adequate resources for interpreting the world. Correspondingly, we can understand *fangwai* as being “outwardly directed,” which describes the Daoist return to, and deference before, what remains at the limits of our interpretations, namely, the alterity of a creatively transforming world.

2.2.2 *Xuande* 玄德 and the Other

While *xuandao* describes the fundamental alterity issuing from the background horizon of the world, *xuande* describes the particular way in which the sage responds to, and takes responsibility for, this alterity. *De*, like the Latin *virtus*, refers to a cultivated efficacy, i.e., “virtuosity,” and to a superlative moral disposition towards Others, i.e., a “virtuous” comportment. However, while the English terms virtuosity and virtue distinguish two distinct domains of skill, namely technical and moral skill, *de* does not mirror this same divide. The significance of this divergence is that it reveals an important difference in the ethical “ontology” underlying the moral sensibility of the Daoist. The distinction between moral and technical skill in Aristotle, for example, is predicated on a distinction between *who* is morally considerable and *what* is not. The Daoist, on the other hand, is unwilling to hierarchically organize a situation in terms of objects of moral concern and objects of instrumental concern; rather, she appreciates the integrity and interdependence of the entire situation, and acts to nurture its comprehensive quality.

In *Thinking from the Han*, Hall and Ames depict this holistic nurturing in terms of the particular's capacity to "focus" a situation. Citing the *Shuowen* lexicon's definition of *de* as *sheng* (升) meaning "to ascend," "to arise," "to presence," as support for their focus-field model, they define *de* as "the emergence of particularity as a determining focus of the field that contextualizes it" (TFH 39). This definition is significant in that a situation's coming-into-focus is not conceived as a one-way causal process wherein an independent agent forcefully determines its situation. Rather, the particular "emerges" and achieves its concrete individuality as an aspect of the burgeoning situation. Hence, the Daoist image of the "un-carved block" (*pu* 樸) not only speaks to an absence of conceptual "baggage" shouldered by the sage, but also suggests a preparedness to be *shaped* by the budding situation. It is because of the fundamental interpenetration of agency and patience that Hall and Ames claim, "its [a particular] context in whatever direction and degree, can always be construed inclusively or exclusively as either 'us' or 'other'" (TFH 39). On this view, alterity shares in determining the self, and remains an intimate aspect of its particularity without ever being appropriated (*buyou* 不有) by the Same. The bi-directionality of this process is crucial for understanding how the *xuande* (玄德) cultivated by the Daoist emerges from *xuandao* (玄道), and why, as a moral posture, *xuande* is especially sensitive to alterity.

The Daoist critique of Confucian conventions, most notably, ritual propriety (*li*), centres on the way in which conventional modes of action treat a situation as token of a type, thereby alienating the particular from the concrete individuality of *its* situation. The Daoist, on the other hand, continually performs a radical de-centering of the human

subject, by giving full import to a situation as always further situated. The expanding situation relocates the perspective of the agent, and thereby precipitates an ongoing reconstitution of subjectivity. Hence, the Daoist does not negate the disclosing power (德) of a *personal perspective*; indeed, she is particularly sensitive to the unique ways in which our embodiment and our individual capacities are a necessary condition for our entry into a situation. Rather, she resists the coercive force (為) originating with an abstracted *human worldview*, which subordinates a situation according to human projects and values. In other words, the Daoist strives to shelter the inherent alterity of a situation. Thus, what is often mistakenly considered to be a form of skeptical relativism is, in actuality, a more panoramic appreciation of the alterity within which we find ourselves.

Hall and Ames point to a related distinction in the *Zhuangzi* between the strong notion of ego-Self (*wo* 我), which construes a situation *assertively*, and the weaker notion of self (*wu* 吾), which construes a situation *deferentially* (TFH 57).²⁹ *Wo* describes a substantial self that abstractly conceives of itself as context-independent and permanent. It is a self that has reified its patterns of knowing, feeling, and acting such that it has effectively ceased being authentically responsive to the world, and instead, aggressively imposes its sedimented judgments on experience: *it has a view on* the world. *Wu*, on the other hand, describes a concretely embedded self that spontaneously discovers itself in and through its interactions with the world, and thereby feels itself as a negotiated process of creation: *it is a perspective in* the world. This embedded, embodied, and enacted self

²⁹ The character for *wu* 吾 consists of 五, meaning "five," and 口, denoting a "mouth" or "opening," hence *wu* describes the five openings (senses) that makes possible the interweaving of self and world.

invites in, and defers to, the alterity of its environs. Consequently, “[t]he goal of cultivation of the self for the Daoist is to move from activities of *knowing*, *feeling*, and *action* shaped by construal, to those shaped by deference [italics mine]” (TFH 49).³⁰

The achievement of a deferential comportment requires letting go of the substantial self (*wo*), in order to return (返) to the originally embedded self (*wu*) by realizing *wuzhi* (無知) “non-theoretical knowing,” *wuyu* (無欲) “non-covetous appreciation,” *wuqing* (無情) “non-judgmental feeling,” and *wuwei* (無為) “non-coercive action.” Each of these qualifications on our typical modes of being intervene in the reproduction of the sedimented self, and yields a corresponding softening of the line between self and situation. The self that has a view *on* the world (我) sinks back into its situation to become a perspective *in* the world (吾).

While our typical behaviour presumes that knowledge, desire, feeling, and action originate in the self, the various “*wu*-forms” challenge the centrality of the subject.³¹ As a correlative of *you* (有), meaning “to possess” or “to have,” the *wu*-(無)-forms point to the fact that the embedded self “does not possess” *zhi*, *yu*, *qing*, or *wei*; rather, knowledge, desire, feeling, and action are emergent features distributed across the comprehensive situation, and not simply located in an independent agent.

The description of *wuzhi* offered by Hall and Ames echoes the claim that *wuzhi* is not something possessed by a subject: “*Wuzhi* provides one with a sense of the *de* of a

³⁰ Hall and Ames sense of the term “construal” is intended to contrast with “deference,” and therefore does not agree with my use of the term, which, as I have detailed above, describes a preliminary appreciation of a situation.

³¹ I am indebted to *Thinking from the Han* for this wonderful shorthand: the “*wu*-forms.”

thing, its particular focus, rather than knowledge of a thing in relation to some concept or universal² (TFH 50). Rather than appropriating (有) the Other as a particular instantiation of a universal, namely as knowledge, *wuzhi* appreciates the place of the Other within its situation. It is to be oriented by the Other: "As such, it is action that accommodates the other to whom one is responding" (TFH 53).

This notion of *wuzhi* helps shed light on Zhuangzi's description of a non-reductive empathy: "To identify with all without each losing his own identity means greatness" (SCP 204). It also helps illuminate Zhuangzi's emphasis on experiential openness, on the one hand, and his serious unease about discriminative knowledge, on the other: "To 'divide,' then is to leave something undivided: to 'discriminate between alternatives' is to leave something which is neither alternative. [...] The sage keeps it in his breast, common men argue over alternatives to show it to each other. Hence I say: 'To 'discriminate between alternatives' is to *fail to see something*' [Italics mine]" (CT 57). *Wuzhi* is content with simply being open to its situation, while discriminative knowledge contains an internal regulatory logic with an inferential trajectory. Thus, discrimination pursues and exposes while *wuzhi* abides: "Hence to know how to stay within the sphere of our ignorance is to attain the highest. Who knows an unspoken discrimination, an untold *dao*?" (tr. mod., CT 40).

The cognitive import of *wuzhi* is closer to a "knowing-how" than a "knowing-what," since it immediately instructs us *how* to respond to the Other, instead of telling us *what* the Other is. In contrast to a theoretical knowledge of essences, which entails an inferential relation to action, this kind of pragmatic awareness leads spontaneously to action. In his book, *Ethical Know-How*, Francisco Varela not only distinguishes between

ethical reasoning and a spontaneous moral “coping,” but also argues that such coping emerges as a direct response to a holistic situation: “Actions such as these do not spring from judgment and reasoning, but from an *immediate coping* with what is confronting us. We can only say we do such things because the situation brought forth the actions from us” (EKH 5).

In a parallel fashion, Hall and Ames suggest that *wuyu* “is not shaped by the need to control, or consume, but simply to celebrate and to enjoy” and “always allows for letting be and letting go” (TFH 54). *Wuyu* describes a desire that is not oriented towards objects, hence Hall and Ames rendering of *wuyu* as “objectless desire;” but a desire for the maximum consummation of the holistic situation. Consequently, it is not a desire for the Other, but a desire for the sake of the Others: “*de* and *dao* foster (畜), guide (長), develop (遂), shelter (亭), comfort (毒), nurture (養), and shield (覆) the myriad things” (Daodejing §51).

The conclusion of the seventeenth chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, “Autumn Floods,” provides an insightful glimpse into the Daoist notion of *wuqing* through an exchange between Huizi, the “logician,” and Zhuangzi concerning the primordially affective dimension of experience. The dialogue begins with an offhand remark from Zhuangzi about the happiness of the fish darting beneath the bridge. Huizi retorts, “Whence do you know the fish are happy?” (CT 123). The force of the dialogue lies in the way in which Zhuangzi deflates the skepticism of Huizi’s abstract self (我) by exposing the un-skeptical assumptions underlying Huizi’s question. Zhuangzi thereby reveals the hidden efficacy (玄德) of Huizi’s concretely embedded self (吾): “When you said ‘Whence do you know

that the fish are happy?', you asked me the question already knowing that I knew" (CT 123). Zhuangzi then points to his embeddedness in the situation in order to explain how he knows: "I knew it from standing here beside the *Hao*" (tr. mod., CT 123).

For Zhuangzi, the situation not only allows for the differences between the three perspectives (Zhuangzi, Huizi, and the fishes), but also underlies the very possibility of the conversation itself, including Zhuangzi's claim to know the enjoyment of the fish and Huizi's skepticism. For Zhuangzi, the happiness is not a transcendent possession of the fish, but a constitutive dimension of the situation shared between the three perspectives. For Zhuangzi, it is simply not a question of access, and this is precisely what he points to in Huizi's question.

Zhuangzi's understanding of "feeling" (*qing* 情) is quite similar to Heidegger's understanding of "situated affectedness" (*Befindlichkeit*) and "attunement" (*Stimmung*), inasmuch as affectivity is not a supplement to experience, but a constitutive aspect that is equiprimordial with the disclosure of one's situation. For the Daoist, the depositing of affective discriminations on top of experience obfuscates rather than clarifies our encounters with the world. For someone like Zhuangzi, the constant inundation of judgments smothers and stifles the very possibility of spontaneous experience.

Wuwei, literally "without acting," advocates a particular *style* of action, and not a life of quietism or inaction, as is sometimes believed. Indeed, passages such as §3 of the *Daodejing*, which speak of *weiwuwei* (為無為) or "acting without acting," underscore the fact that *wuwei* is intended to qualify our everyday activity and not negate it. *Wuwei* emerges as a spontaneous response to an appreciation of the *de* of Others (*wuzhi*), to a desire to promote the total situation (*wuyu*), and to a basic attunement to the felt quality

suffusing the disclosed situation (*wuqing*). Consequently, *wuwei* describes the concrete manifestation of *xuande* as an attentive graciousness towards alterity:

Actions untainted by stored knowledge or ingrained habits are unmediated, unstructured, unprincipled, and spontaneous. As such they are consequences of deferential responses to the item or event in accordance with which, or in relation to which, one is acting (*TFH* 52).

For the Daoist, such actions must be genuine, in that they spontaneously emerge as a profound expression of existential deference, rather than as a formal expression of ritualized deference, which is the Daoist charge against Confucianism. To affect an attitude of deference may stabilize social relations, but it is ultimately superficial in that it maintains the centrality of an agent, who chooses to affect such a disposition. On the other hand, the mystery and profundity of *xuande* as a deferential comportment originates spontaneously (*ziran*) from the alterity of the situation (*xuandao*) as constitutive of the self (*wu*), and not with an individual act of will.

In his book, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, François Jullien argues that the notion of *shi* 勢, “the propensity of situation,” is a fundamental presupposition informing the Chinese sense of “efficacy.”³² Jullien’s analysis of *shi* centres on understanding how an inherent power not only suffuses every situation, but also colours a situation as it inevitably develops around certain axes. The assemblage of tensions and stabilities configuring a situation determine a specific array of possibilities, while excluding those lying outside the situation’s propensity. Thus, according to Jullien, as situations arise and evolve, they converge towards an increasingly narrow set of

³² In *The Propensity of Things*, François Jullien argues that the Chinese conception of efficacy differs radically from the Western conception in two fundamental respects: 1) efficacy in the West is based on an external conception of efficient cause, while the Chinese intuition sees efficacy in terms of the natural deployment of a situation, which is internally regulative, and 2) the emphasis on efficient cause has led to an emphasis upon “agency” in the West, while the Chinese worldview has given priority to “situation.”

possibilities until eventually only one possibility remains, which is precisely the possibility that has begun to be realized.³³

When this conception of efficacy is applied to the domain of ethics, it radically transforms the nature of moral action. While the moral idealist mistakenly believes that he can transform a situation through sheer coercive force, the sage recognizes the inevitable failure and waste of resources entailed by such recklessness:

Heaven is a unity, and a sage, in his wisdom, can reconcile both aspects. He can understand the regulatory logic behind the circumstances as well as perceive an opportunity as it begins to arise, thanks to his understanding of the processes. Second, while “a tendency is always predetermined,” it also remains within human power to manage it skillfully (*PoT* 203-4).

On this view, moral action does not aim at satisfying an abstract principle, but entails a practical contribution to the overall quality of the developing situation. Such a notion of responsibility is not reducible to self-interest, because it takes its clue from the collective interests of the context. Moreover, by maximizing harmony (和), the productive aspect of the situation is maximally sustainable with the least investment of energy—a feature characteristic of *wuwei*. The power of such a minimal investment of effort is explained by the fact that creatively maximizing harmony among constituents necessarily capitalizes on the cohesive powers already present, while curtailing the internal tensions working to dissipate the newly created situation.

Furthermore, we can use Jullien’s analysis of *shi*, in order to understand the Daoist admonition against competition: “The *dao* of *tian* is to benefit, but not harm. The *dao* of the sage is to act, but not compete (不爭 *buzheng*)” (*Daodejing* §81). Competition, for the

³³ In many respects, Jullien’s portrayal of propensity can be meaningfully compared to the concept of “conrescence” in Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*. Corrected Edition. Eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne. New York: The Free Press, 1978; hereafter indicated as “PR.”

Daoist, not only describes an agon between individuals, but, perhaps even more importantly, includes one's struggles against the propensity of situations. Consequently, the describes the mysterious *virtus* of the sage (§10) and *dao* (§51) in the same terms; namely, as the ability to steer, rather than to dominate, a situation: "To lead them (長) but not to master them (不幸)—this is called profound and mysterious virtue (玄德 *xuan de*)" (*Daodejing* §10) and "Dao leads them (長) but does not master them (不幸). This is called profound and mysterious virtue (玄德 *xuan de*)" (*Daodejing* §51).

Before concluding this discussion of Daoism, I would like to examine a uniquely Daoist strategy for displacing the hegemony of the Same in favour of a deep appreciation of alterity. The *Zhuangzi*, in particular, is replete with illustrations of the virtue of *uselessness* as a means of resisting appropriation by the Same.

In the first chapter, "Free and Easy Wandering," Hui Shi complains about his gnarled ailanthus tree, which he takes to be of no obvious use. In his typically playful manner, Zhuangzi's replies:

Now if you have a great tree and think it's a pity it's so useless, why not plant it in the realm of Nothingwhatever, in the wilds which spread out into nowhere, and go roaming away to do nothing at its side, ramble around and fall asleep in its shade? Spared by the axe no thing will harm it. If you're no use at all, who'll come to bother you? (CT 30).

Notice that Zhuangzi's primary concern here is *not* to find some use, unconventional or otherwise, for the tree, but to disrupt Huizi's instrumental valuing of the tree. Rather than exploiting the tree, Zhuangzi advocates a fraternal relationship in which the tree is a companion. By telling Huizi to "do nothing by its side," to simply be alongside the tree, Zhuangzi provides a concrete image of the harmonization of two value-centres, rather than

a hierarchical relationship in which the tree acquires instrumental value, because of its service to the intrinsically valuable human being (Huizi).

This same concern returns to dominate the latter part of the fourth chapter, "Worldly Business Among Men." First, we hear of Carpenter Shi, who finds a gigantic serrate Oak at the shrine in Crooked Shaft, and then chides his apprentice for failing to recognize the uselessness of the great tree. That evening the tree appears to Shi in a dream:

With what do you propose to compare me? Would it be with those useful trees? As for the sort that bear fruits or berries, the cherry-apple, pear, orange, pumelo, when the fruit ripens they are stripped, and in being stripped they are disgracefully abused, their branches broken, their twigs snapped off. These are trees, which by their own abilities make life miserable for themselves; and so they die in mid-path without lasting out the years assigned to them by *tian* (trans. mod., CT 73).

This story of Carpenter Shi is followed by the analogous tale of Zi Qi of Nanbo, who encounters a similarly useless tree. The chapter concludes with the examples of two cripples, Crippled Shu and Jie Yu, the "Madman of Chu," who proclaims, "All men know the uses of the useful, but nobody knows the uses of the useless" (CT 75).

Zhuangzi's preoccupation with the "useless" is precisely a concern about the instrumental value that the non-human (the trees) and the not-quite-fully-human (the two cripples) acquire because they "show up" as something to be absorbed by individual or social projects. Within the theoretical framework of our discussion, "uselessness" denotes a thing's alterity with respect to the projects of the Same. To be useless is to remain Other, while to be useful is to be assimilated. Indeed, Zhuangzi presents uselessness as a strategy for resisting appropriation, and thereby for preserving one's alterity and intrinsic worth: "I [the serrate Oak] would add that this quest of mine to become of no possible use to anyone has been going on for a long time: only now, on the verge of death, have I

achieved it, and to me it is supremely useful" (CT 73). Thus, by being useless, the trees and cripples secure the necessary autonomy for pursuing their own projects.

It is not accidental that the question of usefulness saturates the chapter about being "In the World of Men." Zhuangzi's point is that usefulness is always a pragmatic matter of value and relevance. The conventional notion of "usefulness" is underwritten by an anthropocentric worldview, and by an unduly restrictive conception of an able-bodied "anthro" at the centre. Consequently, the interests of gnarled trees and crooked humans remain outside the purview of "normal" human projects.

Thus, it is not surprising that Zhuangzi borrows the character of Jie Yu, the madman of Chu, from the *Analects* 18:5, wherein Jie Yu appears briefly, only to avoid Confucius and rush off. From the outset, the character of Jie Yu is introduced in the *Analects* as "the madman of Chu." This epithet already places him at the fringes of his community, but what is more, is that all the reader hears from Jie Yu, is a "madman's" song about the decline of virtue. Any substantive exchange with Confucius is aborted before it begins, and Jie Yu remains an elusive character at the margins of the *Analects*. However, since it is precisely against the fervent humanism of Confucianism that Zhuangzi directs his point on being "useless," he invokes Jie Yu as the perfect mouthpiece to sing of the value of his uselessness.

2.3 Buddhism and Alterity

Since the thinkers comprising the focus of the fourth chapter are, for the most part, overtly Buddhist in their orientation, this final section will be shorter than the discussions of Confucianism and Daoism. To put it differently, since Confucian and Daoist ideas inhabit a more distant background in the Japanese thought treated in Chapter Four, it was

necessary to expend somewhat more energy in clarifying those ideas. A second qualification with respect to this section concerns the emphasis placed on *Huayan* (J. *Kegon*) ahead of *Tiantai* (J. *Tendai*) Buddhist philosophy. Essentially, I will be treating *Huayan* and *Tiantai* as functionally equivalent in light of their fundamental ontological insights. Admittedly, this treatment ignores those aspects of their respective systems that differ significantly; however, to truly draw out the subtlety of the differences between them would require a project of its own.³⁴ At bottom, my justification for focusing on *Huayan* is simply that I find a couple of key passages from the “Treatise on the Golden Lion” (*Jinshi zizhang* 全獅子章) and the “Hundred Gates to the Sea of Ideas of the Flowerly Splendor Scripture” (*Huayan yihai bomen* 草巖義海百門) by Fazang (643-721) to be particularly expedient for explicating the ontological implications of *Huayan* and, by extension, *Tiantai* thinking.

In terms of the order of presentation, I will begin with *Huayan* philosophy as exemplifying the basic Buddhist insight into the ontological intimacy of self and Other. I will then turn to *karma* as a Buddhist device (*upâya*) for representing the economy of the Same, and conclude with a discussion of the Bodhisattva Vows as an *upâya* for opening and orienting the self towards Otherness.

³⁴ For an excellent discussion concerning the metaphysics of *Tiantai* thought, see Brook Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good. Omniscience, Intersubjectivity, and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000; hereafter indicated as “EG.” In particular, see EG 170-198 for Ziporyn’s insightful discussion of the differences between the positions of *Tiantai*, *Huayan*, and *Chan*.

2.3.1 *Huayan*: The Ontological Intimacy of Self and Other

Textually, the roots of *Huayan* can be traced to the teachings of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and the oft-cited metaphor of “Indra’s Net,”³⁵ while from a philosophical perspective, the *Huayan* teachings articulate the ultimate implications of “dependent co-origination” (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*, J. *engi*). *Huayan* holds that the natural consequence of the ontological relativity and non-essentiality expressed in the doctrine of dependent co-origination is the mutual inclusion (*xiangju* 相入), mutual interpenetration (*xiangrong* 相融), and the mutual harmonization (*xianghe* 相和) of all phenomena (*shi* 事). On the view of Fazang, one of the foremost expositors of *Huayan*, dependent co-origination entails that phenomena are not ontologically estranged from each other, but that “the far and the near” spatially and temporally coincide in each phenomenon (SCP 421). Simply put, Fazang is challenging what, in contemporary terms, A. N. Whitehead has called the “fallacy of simple location.”³⁶

However, the *Huayan* metaphysical view is not merely a logical consequence of dependent co-origination, but, as Fazang reveals in his “Treatise on the Golden Lion,” it is phenomenologically evident in experience:

If we look at the lion [as lion], there is only the lion and no gold. This means that the lion is manifest while the gold is hidden. If we look at the gold, there is only the gold and no lion. This means that the gold is manifest while the lion is hidden. If we look at them both, then both are manifest and both hidden. Being hidden, they are secret, and being manifest, they are evident. This is called the gate of the completion of the secret, the hidden, and the manifest” (SCP 411-2; brackets in original).

³⁵ “Indra’s Net” is said to have a jewel at each node, which like Leibniz’ “monadology,” reflects the contents of each and every other jewel in the net. The image represents the holographic interpenetration of all entities (*dharmas*).

³⁶ Whitehead defines the “fallacy of simple location” as the “presupposition of individual independence” (PR 137).

In this passage, Fazang correlates focal attention with manifestation or presence. By phenomenologically varying where we place our attention, we alter what enters the foreground of experience—what becomes manifest—and what recedes into the background of experience—what becomes hidden. Like the famous “Duck-Rabbit,” Fazang’s description draws out a kind of meta-attention that can reflect on the *gestalt-switch* (phenomenological relativity) between the phenomenon *qua* lion and the phenomenon *qua* gold.

If left simply with the distinction between the lion and the gold, however, it would be easy to misinterpret Fazang’s discussion as merely pointing to the classic metaphysical dualism of “form” and “matter.” In his “Hundred Gates to the Sea of Ideas of the Flowery Splendor Scripture,” Fazang makes it clear that he is interested in the ontological intimacy *between* entities, rather than clarifying a metaphysical distinction internal to a single entity. Once again, he utilizes the language of “hidden” and “manifest” in order to explicate the ontological and phenomenological co-presence and co-involvement of phenomena:

If the dust involves the others, then the others become hidden and the dust becomes manifest. If the others involve the dust, then the dust becomes hidden while the others become manifest. Being hidden and manifest are identical, for at the moment of being manifest it is already hidden. Why? Because at the time [the one] is manifest, [the others] are all hidden, which makes it possible [for the one] to be manifest, and at the time [the one] is hidden, [the others] are all manifest, which makes it possible [for the one] to be hidden. As being hidden and being manifest establish each other, therefore the time of being hidden is precisely the time of being manifest and the time of being manifest is precisely the time of being hidden” (SCP 417-8; brackets in original).

Whereas the passage cited from the “Golden Lion” pointed to the non-obstruction and interpenetration of phenomena, this passage points, even more positively, to the way in which entities are ontologically *co-establishing*. From the standpoint of *Huayan*, then, self and Other interpenetrate and co-establish each other. Thus, rather than a fundamentally

agonistic relationship between self and Other(s), *Huayan* argues for a fundamental ontological solidarity.³⁷ In *Religion and Nothingness*, Nishitani's discussion of "circumfluent interpenetration" (*egoteki sōnyū* 回互的相入) provides a helpful re-articulation of this solidarity.³⁸ Compare this passage with the Fazang passage above:

To say that a *thing is not itself* means that, while continuing to be itself, it is in the originating-ground of everything else [...] *That a thing is itself* means that all other things, while continuing to be themselves, are in the originating-ground of that thing; that precisely when a thing is on its own originating-ground, everything else is there too; that the roots of every other thing spread across its originating-ground (trans. mod., RN 149).

In Nishitani's terms, we can examine a thing from the standpoint of its being the ontological center, which is to say from the standpoint of it as "manifest," or we can examine a thing from the standpoint of its being ontologically constitutive, which is to say from the standpoint of it as "hidden." Neither Fazang nor Nishitani understand the identity of a thing as simply contained within itself, which is to say that a thing's identity is simply not something distinct from the entire causal configuration of the Others' contribution: causal interpenetration is conceived as ontological inclusion, containment, and identification. This strong ontological intimacy of entities with respect to causal relations is what grounds the *Huayan* claim concerning the "complete interpenetration of particular events and particular events" (*shi shi yuan rong* 事事圓融). On this view, alterity lies inextricably at the very ground of a thing's identity. This emphasis on the constitutive

³⁷ In another passage, Fazang characterizes the phenomenological attention around a particle of dust, with its attending ontological perspective, in terms of "contraction" and "expansion": "When contracted, all things are manifested in one particle of dust. When expanded, one particle of dust will universally permeate everything. Expanding is the same as ever contracting, for a particle of dust involves everything. Contracting is the same as ever expanding, for everything involves the one particle of dust" (SCP 424).

³⁸ I have deviated from Van Bragt's translation of *egoteki sōnyū* as "circuminsessional interpenetration" simply to avoid its abstract theological associations. Conversely, I contend that the concrete images clustered around the root notion of "fluid" (e.g., the centrality of water within the Daoist tradition) are more natural to the East Asian perspective.

dimension of Otherness in relation to identity sheds light on contradictory Buddhist's claims, such as "it is *not* this thing or that, therefore it *is* this thing or that" (RN 124).³⁹

Moreover, for Fazang and Nishitani, neither ontological solidarity (dependent co-origination) nor non-substantiality (emptiness) effaces the particularity or difference of a *dharma*. Rather than the uniqueness of a thing belonging to its essence or substance, its individuality and uniqueness with respect to all other entities is constituted by the place (*dharma*-position) an entity occupies within the field of ontological solidarity: a phenomenon's particularity extends to its causal uniqueness vis-à-vis other entities. On this *Huayan* model, an entity not only occupies a position of uniqueness with respect to Others, but also with respect to its past and future selves. This is in sharp contrast to the standpoint of substance-based metaphysics wherein a thing's uniqueness inheres in its essence.⁴⁰ On this view, a thing's uniqueness or difference becomes reducible to self-sameness over time, that is, it may differ from Others, but never from itself. When considered in terms of temporality, the distinction between these two models of uniqueness becomes extremely important, because, for the Buddhists, ontological uniqueness and temporal-spatial uniqueness coincide. Thus, the Buddhist view of ontological relativity can entertain a more radical conception of uniqueness. Moreover, this confluence of temporal and ontological uniqueness constitutes the irreducibility of *this*

³⁹ This paradoxical claim is an instance of *soku hi* (即非) logic—"is *qua* is not" logic—characteristic of Japanese Zen.

⁴⁰ Some Western metaphysical positions have defined the uniqueness of a thing in terms of its temporal and spatial coordinates, rather than in terms of its essence per se. For the Buddhists, temporality, spatiality, and causality each represent genuine axes differentiating a thing in a "thick" sense. In contrast, the coordinates of thing (and here I mean thing in contradistinction to person or soul) in homogenous space and homogenous time provide for a rather "thin" means of differentiation. However, building a thing's uniqueness into its essence (here it is more likely to be person or soul), ultimately renders it *indifferent* to space and time.

soteriological situation in which one can authenticate one's Buddha-nature (*busshō* 佛性) right here and now.

To conclude, Ziporyn's account of "omnicentric holism" or "omnicentrism" provides a succinct philosophical summation of the relation between particular and whole:

The doctrine that the quiddities of all things are determined solely by their relations to other things, and thus the whole is more than the sum of its parts (holism), but that this is true in so thorough a sense that each point in any whole is a center of that whole, such that each one adequately represents, perceives, and includes the whole. This means that any part *is* the whole itself, and all the parts inherently include each other (EG 466).

2.3.2 *Karma* and Sameness

Karma literally means "action," and yet it is more than action. For Hindus and Buddhists alike, *karma* points beyond action to include the fruits or results of action.⁴¹ This is simply to point out that all *doings* are correlated to *consequences*. The consequences that are the focus of the doctrine of *karma*, however, are not material effects in the world, i.e., artifacts produced by action, but the ethico-religious consequences for the self and for Others. As an ethico-religious doctrine, *karma* provides a way of speaking about the *reflexivity of actions* upon the self, which is to say that all actions are bi-directional as even Other-directed actions include effects on the self. Secondly, then, it offers a way of addressing *inconspicuous effects*, that is, actions often include tacit consequences beyond their readily observable outcomes. By generalizing on the first two points, it becomes clear that *karma* affords a "wide" account of the causal situation in which the self discovers

⁴¹ Although there are significant continuities in the concept of *karma*, which the Buddhists adopt from the Hindus, there are real differences in the function of *karmā* within their respective systems of thought. For example, according to Abe Masao, "Unlike the Hindu concept of *karma*, however, *karma* in Buddhism is not deterministic since there is in Buddhism no idea of God who is the controller of *karma*; rather Buddhism takes *karma* as moral power," Abe Masao, *Zen and Western Thought*. Ed. William R. LaFleur. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989, 214; hereafter indicated as "ZWT."

itself and from which it must act. Gereon Kopf notes, "*Karma* is designed to explain the context of the experiential 'I,' its historicity and its *factuality*."⁴²

The "factuality" of the self's situation is not neutral, but reveals itself as an existential predicament. The Buddha's First Noble Truth offers a laconic description of this predicament: "All this is suffering (*dukkha*)," while the doctrine of "no-self" (*anâtman*) presents a remedy. This remedy implies at least one of the causal conditions responsible for the arising of this predicament, namely, belief in a substantial and essential self (*âtman*). One of the ways of diagnosing the emergence of, and bondage to, this belief in a substantial self is *karma*.

At the level of experience, we consciously identify our selves with "our" experience; at the metaphysical level, we ascribe this experience to an underlying essence that is the receptacle of this experience; and even at the bodily level, we locate this self amidst the habits of our movement, speech, and emotional response. In each case, there is a relationship between activity and its fruits. Indeed, one of the implications of *karma* is the reification of the self in terms of habitual reactions to the world. Our actions inscribe upon the continuity of experience channels of "blind" reaction in which we divine a self as the ground of such continuity.

In *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, Karl Potter equates *karma* with habit formation, and then points out, "to be at the mercy of one's habits is to be out of control, that is to say, in bondage."⁴³ To be sure, one can distinguish between the positive-sense of habit as "skill," which is to say an acquired facility, and a negative-sense of habit as "blind reaction." Potter argues, however, that skills possess an intrinsic disposition to reify into

⁴² Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity. Dôgen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self*. Surrey, U.K.: Curzon Press, 2001, 138.

⁴³ Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991, 12; hereafter indicated as "PoIP."

blind reactions, which is to say that our activity tends towards reactivity. On Potter's view, it is precisely due to their success that there exists a tendency to cling to productive habits, and thereby a tendency to convert them to impediments. To put his point somewhat differently, habits begin as a way of forming the world, but then begin to form us.⁴⁴ Potter suggests that the connection between *karma* and *avidyâ* ("ignorance" or "lack of insight") is a reflection of this hardening of *response* into *reaction*. He further notes that in the *Bhagavadgîtâ* and in Jainist philosophy, *karma* is equated with a dirt that obscures action and insight: "Karma is described in the philosophy of the Jains, for example as a kind of dirt which accretes to the otherwise pure *jîva* or self by virtue of one's actions. This dirt clouds, i.e., restricts, the self in its activities, and regulates the behavior of that *jîva*" (PoIP 13). Since it either obscures our sight or tunnels our vision, *karma* accounts for the failure of the self to accommodate novelty and the heretofore unseen.

Within the framework of this study, *karma* provides a mechanism for thinking about the production and reinforcement of the Same and the corresponding incapacity to accommodate alterity. At least on this interpretation, *karma* describes the economy of the Same.⁴⁵ *Karma* insulates the self from alterity by generating a static stance on the world *qua* action and belief. From a phenomenological standpoint, *karma* can be compared to *sedimentation*, while from a hermeneutical standpoint it can be likened to *unproductive prejudices*. However, by running the comparison in the other direction, the Buddhist analysis of the relation between the failure to accommodate alterity and a commitment to

⁴⁴ In many ways, this account resembles Heidegger's concerns about "technicity" (*die Technik*).

⁴⁵ This interpretation of *karma* is not uncontroversial. For example, Peter Hershock argues for a productive understanding of *karma* in Chinese Buddhism, generally, and in *Chan*, in particular; see Peter D. Hershock, *Liberating Intimacy. Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Ch'an Buddhism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996. Moreover, there is disagreement within the tradition itself about whether all *karma* is problematic or whether there is a distinction between productive and unproductive *karma*.

the concept of self ought to have implications for the question of the Other. Indeed, these implications will be entertained in subsequent chapters.

2.3.3 The Bodhisattva's *Inconceivable Vows* and the Other

If *karma* represents part of the Buddhist analysis of the Same, then the Bodhisattva constitutes a significant ingredient in its response to the Other. Since a discussion about individual Bodhisattvas would absorb volumes, this discussion will focus on the Bodhisattva ideal as it is defined by the *Four Inconceivable Vows*:

*Living beings are infinite, I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to cut through them.
Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to enter them.
The Buddha Way is unsurpassable, I vow to realize it.*⁴⁶

The Inconceivable Vows mark a radical commitment to the Other. The very characterization of the vows as "inconceivable" reveals a participation with alterity at the level of the concept. The vows are inconceivable because they negate the logic of identity and exceed the rational. Indeed, their excess openly rejects the Kantian grounding of the *I ought* in the *I can*. From the standpoint of the law of non-contradiction, the indefiniteness of the vows renders them incomprehensible, while from the standpoint of praxis the Bodhisattva's commitments would seem to transcend the capacity to ever realize them. If it is logically and practically impossible to act in relation to the infinite, the inexhaustible, and the boundless, then how could anyone sincerely take such vows?⁴⁷ And would not the

⁴⁶ Taigen Daniel Leighton, *Bodhisattva Archetypes. Classic Buddhist Guides to Awakening and their Modern Expression*. New York: Penguin Arkana, 1998, 10.

⁴⁷ The indeterminacy of the Vows can also be seen as *upâya* in order to prevent grasping or attachment to them. As inconceivable they approach being an "empty" view. The significance of nonattachment in relation to the Bodhisattva Vows is made explicit in the *Asta Sutra*, "But he does not make either this [Vow], or anything else, into a sign to which he becomes partial." See *The*

impossibility of such sincerity in the face of these vows make them something other than
vows?

The Buddhist response is that “no one” takes these vows; rather they represent the natural expression of no-self. Nishitani explains, “All [Four Great Bodhisattva Vows] are unlimited vows made in the face of unlimited realities. The original countenance of manifesting existence [*gensonzai* 現存在] that emerges into its nature on the field of emptiness cannot be otherwise” (trans. mod., RN 271). The vows, then, can be seen as the expression of Otherness directed towards Otherness. In fact, the vows might be best understood as an approach to orienting action, rather than delineating a final destination. Again, such a focus on orientation ahead of a goal-state would help prevent the vows from reifying into views. The vows then become a concrete expression of compassion instead of the articulation of a universal principle, hence the traditional association of the Bodhisattva Vows with the awakening of absolute and relative *Bodhicitta* (“awakening mind”).

Absolute *Bodhicitta* denotes an awakening to the wisdom of emptiness, while relative *Bodhicitta* denotes an awakening to the practice of perfect compassion.⁴⁸ This distinction between absolute and relative does not refer to an evaluative priority, but to a distinction in the “objects” of the two awakenings. Since the “wisdom of emptiness” (*prajñā*) points to the absence of commitments to any views or essences, it constitutes an orientation towards nothing; thus, it is an absolute position that is *absolved* from any particular position. The “practice of perfect compassion” (*karunā*) is directed towards

Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary. Trans. Edward Conze. Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973, 238-9.

⁴⁸ Shāntideva, *The Way of the Bodhisattva. A Translation of Bodhicharyāvatāra*. Trans. Padmakara Translation Group. Boston: Shambhala Press, 1997, 3.

relative beings, and therefore is considered relative *Bodhicitta*.⁴⁹ But this distinction itself is relative, which is to say that these two aspects of *Bodhicitta* are mutually entailing and mutually supporting. Compassion is the expression of emptiness and emptiness forms the basis of compassion. Indeed, the biconditional relationship between wisdom and compassion mirrors the Mâhâyana view of the relation between *samsara* and *nirvana*. As Abe Masao puts it: "On the basis of the idea of the Bodhisattva, *Mahâyâna* Buddhism thus criticizes and rejects Nirvana as the transcendence of *samsara* and teaches true Nirvana to be the returning to *samsara* by negating or transcending 'Nirvana as the transcendence of *samsara*'" (ZWT 178). The larger context of Abe's comment is that the wisdom of true Nirvana cannot be separate from its expression *qua* a compassionate returning to the "dusty world" in order to benefit Others. Tanabe Hajime articulates a similar point about the transformation of Buddhism through the introduction of the Bodhisattva:

Buddhism, which began simply as an intellectual doctrine about the human condition aimed at delivering the individual from the cycle of birth and death, moved beyond primitive Buddhism's standpoint of solitary enlightenment to a communitarian approach according to which the Dharma is transmitted from master to disciple. A parallel evolution took place on the doctrinal level. With the development of the bodhisattva-ideal in the Mahâyâna tradition, Buddhism developed the ideal of "benefiting oneself—*qua*—benefiting others."⁵⁰

Tanabe's locution: "benefiting oneself-*qua*-benefiting others," is helpful, because the "*qua*," which translates *soku* 即, is not a simple equation. Rather, *soku* is used here in order to note the sameness and the difference of the two moments. While these two modes of benefiting are tightly correlated, it is crucial that the distinction is not entirely lost. For one thing, the kind of benefit required by Others is often very different from the

⁴⁹ Note that the language of "perfect" in relation to compassion signifies complete or total compassion, rather than an essentialized or idealized compassion.

⁵⁰ Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*. Trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, 270.

benefit a Bodhisattva achieves in her journey towards Buddhahood. For example, the Bodhisattva is efficacious in relation to the needs of Others, precisely because he attends to the specificity of the Other's context: "He develops 'skill-in-means' (or 'skillful means' – *upâya*), the ability to adapt himself and his teachings to the level of his hearers, without attachment to any particular doctrine or formula as being necessarily applicable in all cases."⁵¹ It does need to be emphasized, however, that the Bodhisattva does not help Others *in order to* achieve Buddhahood, since the Bodhisattva has already relinquished the desire to be a Buddha. Additionally, the Bodhisattva has already overcome the dualistic distinction between benefiting-self and benefiting-Others, that is, for the Bodhisattva there is only benefiting.

Contra the doctrine of *karma*, which presented itself as an *upâya* for thinking about the closure of Sameness, the Bodhisattva Vows offer an *upâya* for approaching the opening of the self towards alterity. Indeed, it is not accidental that the figure of the Bodhisattva symbolizes a dramatic liberation of *karma* for the entire community. More specifically, the conceptual structure of the vows as "inconceivable," the unlimited commitment of the vows, and the Other-centered wisdom *qua* compassion as expressing the Vows, all work to negate the logic of identity in order to affirm relatedness vis-à-vis the Other.

⁵¹ Paul Williams, *Mahâyâna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*. New York: Routledge, 1989, 51.

CHAPTER 3

Phenomenology and the Other: From “x” to the “Face”

Yet our reflection on the necessity and the need of the beginning of Western thinking might prove a little less “fantastic” if we recall that the Greek thinkers themselves say that the origin of philosophy—hence the origin of what they began—is *θαυμάζειν*, or, as we translate, wonder.¹

3.1 Introduction

Philosophy emerges out of a primordial wonder before the alterity of world, which, for Heidegger, is why Greek thinking was, at bottom, phenomenological. As an attentive turn towards the very fabric of alterity, phenomenology is essentially coupled to the question of the Other. However, this location, which phenomenology occupies between the will to truth and the Other is something of an impossible position. The love of knowledge desires to reel in the transcendence of the transcendent, and yet phenomenology finds its motivation in the very separation between immanence and transcendence. It is a limit point, a vanishing distance, between answer and question, because phenomenology depends on the alterity that it seeks to overcome. The ultimate result of this tension is a schismatic relation to alterity in which the inherent Other-directedness of phenomenology—its marriage to *die Sache*—initiates a complex deferral: a deference ensuring that the Other eludes simple assimilation by the Same.²

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz & André Schuwer. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, 135.

² It is a retreat into “bad faith,” wherein he fails to honour his commitment to *die Sache* by disengaging his attention from the Other, that allows the phenomenologist to falsely believe that a final answer to the question of the Other has been given. In doing so, however, he has already abandoned phenomenology and converted the immanent question of the concrete Other into a timeless problem of an abstract Other. This flight from externality is coupled with an inward turn to the resources of the Same, whether it is the economy of a crude subjectivism or of a philosophical history of “free-floating constructions.” In either case, the Same attends to a projected representation, a mere simulacrum of alterity: the phenomenologist in bad faith no longer copes with the reality of the Other, but plays philosophical make-believe with a “strawman.”

While each methodological advance in phenomenology marks a real response to the question of the Other, the significance of these developments cannot be measured in terms of epistemic progress. Phenomenological advances vis-à-vis the Other do not describe the development of more comprehensive answers to alterity, which would bespeak an approach to the Other qua problem, but delineate and prescribe an intensification of the question issuing from the Other. In other words, phenomenology's maturation must be read as a heightening sensitivity towards the Other and a growing appreciation of alterity. Indeed, it is not coincidental that postmodern preoccupations with alterity (and many of its most emblematic thinkers³) have emerged from, and have maintained a complex relationship with, phenomenology.

Since the question that is the Other does not ask for a resolution but a response qua responsibility, the chronicle of phenomenology details a persistent increase in the *intensity* with which the Other presses. Moreover, the question of the Other constitutes the horizon of openness in which the experience of alterity itself gathers in *density*. The question of the Other is not put to us, but instead we are put in question. Such a questioning can never be definitively answered, only more definitively heard. Our transition into postmodernity has involved acquiring new "ears" for this voice of the Other.⁴

This chapter tracks, within a genealogical context, three parallel trajectories in the relation between phenomenology and the Other. The first line of analysis tracks the mounting concretion (density) of the Other from bare "x" (Kant) to "spirit" (Hegel), "alter

³ The most obvious figures being Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard.

⁴ It is interesting that the postmodern critiques of the privilege of the "visual" metaphors, particularly as they relate to the epistemological projects of modernity (for example, see Derrida's essay "The White Mythology" in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982) have been a necessary component of our cultivating new ears attuned to hearing the question of the Other: our traditional reliance on the visual has made us deaf to the question of the Other.

ego" (Husserl), "world" (Heidegger) "flesh" (Merleau-Ponty), "look" (Sartre), "gender" (de Beauvoir), "meeting" (Buber), and the "face" (Levinas). The second line of analysis tracks a shift from the Other qua epistemic problem to the Other qua ethical obligation: From Kant to Husserl, the Other is conceived in terms of an epistemological problem and appears as a "question mark," while in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty ontology predominates and the Other is implicated in the presenting of what "is." Finally, from Sartre through to Levinas, the question of the Other gains an ethical determination and becomes inextricably bound to the "ought." The third line of analysis tracks the growing centrality of the Other as *the* pressing question of phenomenology (intensity).

Methodologically, each analysis centres on a key phenomenological description, which occupies a formative role within the particular thinker's project and within the broader phenomenological tradition. I shall refer to such paradigmatic phenomenological accounts as "dominant analyses," since their scopes of influence within the tradition have been intensive and extensive. The benefits of focusing on these dominant analyses are obvious in terms of simply containing the discussion, but admittedly such a narrowing does some injustice to the particular historical developments in the span of an individual's philosophical career. However, since my central concern attaches to the evolution of the question of the Other at the level of the phenomenological tradition as such, I contend that the backgrounding of subtler exegetical points pertaining to individuals is both necessary and justified for the sake of foregrounding the ways in which these dominant analyses have structured the tradition's approach to alterity. For example, while Husserl's own approach to the question of the Other underwent marked changes after the *Cartesian Meditations*, the fact remains that the "Fifth Meditation" continues to exert significant influence on phenomenological approaches to the Other.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that “[a]ny approach based on stages of ontogenesis is arbitrary” (ATP 171), by which I take them to be criticizing efforts aimed at locating essences or idealities. The real value of a genealogical-archaeological account is not that it unearths origins or foundations, but that it opens up a *history of relations*.⁵ As such, every ontogenesis gains its explanatory power from the fact that its narrative reflects a particular analytical interest. The ontogenetic narrative animating this chapter is not an attempt to discover essential features of phenomenology or the Other, but to place them in relation. Thus, it is an attempt to disclose the specification of the Other vis-à-vis significant transformations in phenomenological approach. Secondly, it attempts to trace the shift from the problem of the Other as an epistemologically *absence* to the question of the Other as an ethical *superfluity*. By tracking these relations, it is possible to get clearer about how theoretic decisions with respect to phenomenological method *alter* how the Other is disclosed, which is to say the density of the Other’s being, and how the Other presses against us, namely, the intensity of our relations with the Other.

3.1.1 Stage One: The Primacy of Epistemology

This ontogenesis narrates decisive phenomenological developments that have contributed a new level of complexity to the tacit horizon from which the Other is disclosed. We begin with Kant’s bare transcendental ground wherein the fixed categories of the subject organize the totality of experience. The result is that the Other—“x”—occupies a logical position within the system as a pure transcendent unity devoid of content. With Hegel, the horizontal field of *spirit* involves the historicizing and socialization of the categories of experience, which is reflected in the fact that the Other

⁵ Here, I am understanding ontogenetic narratives as a particular species of genealogical-archaeological narratives.

occupies a dynamical role as a moment within the determination of spirit, rather than a static posit of unity (sameness). However, the Other continues to occupy a logical position that is essentially antagonistic (negative), and thereby destined to be transcended.

In Husserl, the Other remains an epistemological problem—solipsism—and thereby represents the condition for the possibility of an intersubjective world. In Husserl's account, the Other emerges under the aspect of "ego" as the appresented correlate of the founding transcendental ego. Even while Husserl introduces the body, it is not disclosed from the concrete horizon of the life-world (as in the *Crisis*), but on the austere horizon of the transcendental ego. In general, the abstractness and formalism of the Other in Husserl's account is simply the correlate of the abstractness and formalism of the transcendental ego.⁶

3.1.2 Stage Two: The Primacy of Ontology

It is with Heidegger's account that we see a shift away from epistemology, but not yet to ethics. Heidegger's ontological analysis discovers the Other qua "Nothing" implicated in the very horizon of being-in-the-world. With this move to fundamental ontology, the relation to alterity is no longer given in terms of knowledge content. Rather, the Other gains the power to affect Dasein in its being. The problem is that even in its positive aspect as "world," alterity subsists as indeterminate familiarity and thereby lacks a determinate status of its own (density), while under the negative aspect of the "Nothing," alterity subsists as the absence of significance and, once again, lacks any determinate status. Alterity, for Heidegger, is structurally indeterminate, because it constitutes the background against which beings become determinate.

⁶ It is precisely due to the abstractness of Husserl's account that I deliberately refer to the "body" rather than to "embodiment."

In the work of Merleau-Ponty, a robust account of embodiment enters onto the phenomenological scene. According to Merleau-Ponty, our encounter with the Other issues forth from the very tissue of the world qua "flesh." The reciprocity (a bidirectional "giving") of seeing and being-seen disclosed from the horizon of embodiment-in-the-world draws the subject qua detached observer into the visible world, thereby revealing the ontological interpenetration of self and Other: reversibility. However, despite the radical nature of Merleau-Ponty's account, the *proximity of bodies* is still interrogated within the ontological-epistemological question of solipsism. Consequently, the ontology of flesh is a reply to the question of individual incarnation and, as such, it fails to confront the question of the moral relation between a community of bodies.

3.1.3 Stage Three: The Primacy of Ethics

In Sartre, the "look" of the Other bears a force paralleling the power of the Nothing in Heidegger's account: the look of the Other de-centres the self, thereby rendering it determinate and accountable. While the force of the Other's look in *Being and Nothingness* corresponds to its local status in relation to the global power of the Nothing in *Being and Time*, it is a mistake to understand Sartre's analysis as merely ontical. On the contrary, Sartre provides an ontological analysis of sociality under the determinate aspect of the look, rather than under the general aspect of *das Man*. By focusing on interaction with the Other qua look, Sartre is able to situate our relation to alterity within moral discourse in a manner that is impossible in Heidegger's analysis. That is, the specificity of the look implicates an entire horizon of concreteness: a determinate Other, who looks at me engaged in a determinate act in a determinate space and time. The major problem with his analysis, which can also be found into the work of Merleau-Ponty and de

Beauvoir, is that Sartre maintains a dichotomous logic with respect to self and Other that is ultimately untenable. The logic of this dichotomy means that Sartre cannot adequately account for our interaction with Other *after* the look. The essentially antagonistic relation between the self and Other structured by plays of dominance aimed at securing recognition simply cannot account for the full spectrum of our relations with alterity, especially what we might call interactions of *quality*, i.e., communication, sharing, and intimacy.

It is with de Beauvoir's introduction of gender into the horizon of the Other that the Same's relation to the Other is questioned vis-à-vis socio-political inclusion. By rendering the Other more definite qua "gender," the question of the ethical relation to alterity is made increasingly conspicuous. Fundamental to de Beauvoir's intervention is her placement of the Other within a *concrete* historical horizon of patriarchy, which differs sharply from the abstract logical history of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, wherein the rhetoric of *necessity* stifles any moral question concerning the relation of *Geist* to alterity.

In Buber, we hear of the "meeting" as the recognition of the primordial relation between *I* and *Thou*. The question in Buber's analysis shifts away from *bridging* the separation between *I* and *It*, to the recognition of that which *intervenes* and *separates* *I* and *Thou*. On Buber's view, separation is derivative of the *between*.⁷ However, Buber too retains a fundamental dichotomy dividing the absolute moment of the *I-Thou* from the relative moment of the *I-It*. This divide preserves the premise of "purity" ascribed to the

⁷ According to Theunissen, Buber's social ontology of the "between" marks a radical departure from the social ontologies of Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre, which he sees as founded on the primacy of the "transcendental subject." Theunissen describes the goal of Buber's thought as "an *ontology of the between*" (TO 272). See Chapter Seven of *The Other* for Theunissen's explication of Buber's dialogical ontology in relation to Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre.

religio-ethico domain, which is exemplified by the eternal and absolute *Thou*, who can never become an *It*.

With Levinas, the “face” of the Other marks the most concrete relation to the Other; namely, a relation given as responsibility qua substitution for the Other. While the intrinsic value of the Other has been conceived as un-substitutability, Levinas notes a corresponding uniqueness within the ethical relation that determines my responsibility as non-deferrable: I and I alone am responsible for the Other. And yet, the uniqueness of the ethical relation of the face falls under the view of God. In both Buber and Levinas, religious presuppositions ultimately sacrifice the irreducible difference of finite Others to the universal mediation of an infinite Other.

3.2 The Other as “x”: Kant and the Transcendental Object

The Kantian critical project remains thoroughly within the Socratic tradition as it presupposes that epistemic responsibility grounds moral responsibility. The work of the first critique aims at disciplining reason by ensuring that it remains within its proper bounds. However, this propriety is purely self-referential, since reason’s limits are determined internally by assessing the extent of reason’s power.⁸ The critique aims at safeguarding the integrity of knowledge, but not the integrity of what is external to knowledge and knowledge-centred projects. In short, the Same determines the limits of its economy by what it can assimilate, rather than what it should assimilate, which is to say that in Kant’s epistemology *can* implies *should*.

⁸ In contrast, ethical discussions of the limits of rights are determined dialogically by including internal considerations (the welfare of the actor) and external considerations (the welfare of Others). For example, my *right* to freely swing my arm is not simply determined by my power for doing so, which is to say internally restricted, but it is limited by the beginning of another’s body, which is to say that it is also externally restricted.

This primacy of epistemology, for Kant, extends even to ontology. The ontological status of that which is exterior to the empirical domain is, by definition, *ideal* rather than real. Ultimately, the Other is a posited unity that is transcendental to our presentations, and therefore radically transcendent to experience. The Other is merely an abstract concept: x as a bare placeholder:

What, then, do we mean when we talk about an object corresponding to, and hence also distinct from cognition [*Erkenntnis*]? We can easily see that this object must be thought only as something as such = x. For, after all, outside our cognition we have nothing that we could contrast with this cognition as something corresponding to it.⁹

This passage reveals how Kant's epistemic pietism drains the object of everything but an ideal ontological status, since there is no mode of access that can reach a standpoint external to our economy of cognitions. Indeed, because cognition refers to the synthesis (performed by the imagination) of a manifold of pure intuition brought to the unity of a concept (performed by the understanding),¹⁰ any meaningful access to objects is necessarily mediated by concepts. Consequently, Kantian epistemology leaves no place for nonconceptual knowledge (i.e., embodied perceptual knowledge), and therefore no room for another order of intelligent contact with the world. As a result, the transcendental object (Other) remains an intangible apparition of contentless unity haunting our experience, which as "something distinct from all our presentations [...] is nothing for us"

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996, 157/A 104; hereafter indicated as "CPR" followed by the page in the English translation followed by the citation for the standard German editions A (1781) or B (1787) as they appear in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* published by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co. and Predecessors, 1902-).

¹⁰ See CPR 130-131/B 103-105.

(CPR 157/A 105).¹¹ The transcendental object acts as a mere placeholder (x), precisely because it functions as the *referential limit* of our empirical intuitions:

The only objects that can be given to us directly are appearances, and what in these appearances refers directly to the object is called intuition. These appearances, however, are not things in themselves. Rather, they are themselves only presentations that in turn have their object. This object, therefore, can no longer be intuited by us, and may hence be named the nonempirical object, i.e., the transcendental object = x (CPR 159-160/A 109).

As a referential limit-concept, the transcendental object = x has no content, just the requisite unity of a concept: "Now this concept (trans. object) cannot contain any determinate intuition whatever, and hence presumably pertains to nothing but that unity which must be encountered in any manifold of cognition insofar as this manifold has reference to an object" (CPR 160/A 109).

Even though unity defines all concepts as such, the unity of the transcendental object as a limit constitutes a point of identity, which serves as a rule¹² for the ordering of experience beyond mere sensibility. It is the very condition for the meaningful organization of presentations into judgments and, ultimately, systems of knowledge: "this object is regarded as what keeps our cognitions from being determined haphazardly or arbitrarily, (and as what ensures), rather, that they are determined a priori in a certain way" (CPR 157 /A104). And yet, according to Kant, the unity of the transcendental object describes a feature of *our* experience, and, as a priori, must originate with us:

¹¹ In footnote 144 of the 1787 edition, Kant argues that "*empirical consciousness of my existence* [...] can be determined only by reference to something outside me" (CPR 36, B XL, fn 144). Essentially, Kant argues that *since* we are aware of ourselves as determined in time in our inner experience, and *since* this determination depends on a *contrast* with things outside of the self, therefore there are things external and distinct from our presentations. Despite this strict "*refutation of psychological idealism*," there can be no content to this external thing beyond its affect in determining the experience of the "I am."

¹² Even at the level of epistemology, Kant conceives of the *form* of a concept as serving as "rule" for the cognition of external presentations and the necessary reproduction of the manifold within appearances.

Clearly, therefore, the unity that the object makes necessary *can be nothing other than* the formal unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of the presentations. When we have brought about synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition—this is when we say that we cognize the object (CPR 157/A 105 [italics added]).

In the end, then, Kant sees the unity of the transcendental object as simply the objective correlate to the unity of transcendental apperception on the side of the subject¹³:

Rather, this transcendental object can serve only, as a correlate of the unity of apperception, for the unity in sensible intuition's manifold by means of which the understanding unites that manifold in the concept of an object (CPR 313/ A 250).

The unknown *x* is thereby reduced to being a feature of *our* spontaneity: "the mind's concerted [*gemeinschaftlich*] function of combining this manifold in one presentation" (CPR 160/A 109).

On the one hand, then, the transcendental structure of presentations refer beyond themselves to the alterity of the transcendental object = *x*, while on the other hand, the apparent alterity of the transcendental object ends up being nothing but the expression of the unity of the transcendental subject. Consequently, the apparent difference of the Other is ultimately reduced to the unity of the Same.

This reduction is entailed by the very conditions of the critique itself. The drive for *a priori* knowledge, as an instance of and an insistence by the will to truth, engenders a reversal of dependence such that Kant posits the possibility that "objects must conform to our cognition" (p. 21/B xvi). Kant argues that we do know necessary and universal truths,

¹³ Indeed, Kant even uses the same notion of "*x*" as placeholder in order to refer to the contentless unity of the transcendental subject, which, like the object=*x* lies *inconveniently* beyond the bounds of access: "Now through this *I* or *he* or *it* (the thing) that thinks, nothing more is presented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = *x*. This subject is cognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the least concept of it; hence we revolve around it in a constant circle, since in order to make any judgment regarding it we must always already make use of its presentation. This is an inconvenience that cannot be separated from it" (p. 385/B 404).

and sets out to discover how it is possible (outside of revelation) that finite beings can possess such knowledge.¹⁴ With the “*a priori*” Kant is specifically concerned with necessary and universal knowledge, which is knowledge that, in principle, cannot originate from contingent and local experience. Consequently, Kant posits that the conditions for a *priori* knowledge must themselves be a *priori*, which is to say transcendental to experience. Thus, it is the experiencing subject and, more specifically, those features of the experiencing subject that are the necessary and universal conditions for the possibility of experience as such, which constitutes the basis for a *priori* knowledge. In Kant, the will to truth has effected the complete dissipation of the alterity of the Other.¹⁵

3.3 The Other as “Spirit”: Hegel and the Master-Servant Dialectic

With regards to Hegel’s thinking about alterity, the “Master-Servant” dialectic (*PhS* §178-§196) constitutes his primary phenomenological account of the Other. Again, this is not to say that this particular analysis wholly determines Hegel’s thinking relevant to the Other, but it is to identify the significance of this account as a fundamental “turning-point” for consciousness within the *Phenomenology*: “It is in self-consciousness, in the Notion of Spirit, that consciousness first finds its turning-point” (*PhS* §177). More importantly, however, it is to acknowledge the tremendous influence that these passages have exerted on subsequent approaches to alterity.

¹⁴ The Kantian “revolution” substitutes the formal *unity* of experience, on the side of the subject, as the ground for necessary and universal knowledge for a metaphysical *totality* of experience, which would be required on the objective side for valid claims of necessity and universality. Such a complete and totalized survey of experience (God’s-eye view) would be required in order to distinguish the contingent and finite from the necessary and universal.

¹⁵ Even Kant’s ethics, which would seem to imply a concrete relation with the Other, turns out to be an abstract relation to reason (unity). Moral actions can only be grounded in pure form (unity and consistency), which entails the bracketing of the object/content. We must be moved by respect for the law and *not* our respect for the concrete Other.

For Hegel, the Other belongs to the domain of meaningful experience, but merely as an opportunity for securing the truth of self-consciousness. As such, the Other is posited as a negative moment to be overcome in the mediation constituting the intersubjective sameness of Spirit: "'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'" (*PhS* §177). On Benhabib's reading, the encounter with the Other is framed in terms of a fundamental negation of the self, or what she characterizes as an initial "wounding," which is then overcome by appropriating the Other via a more severe negation: "The story of the autonomous male ego is the saga of this initial sense of *loss* in confrontation with the other, and the gradual recovery from this original narcissistic wound through the sobering experience of war, fear, domination, anxiety and death" (*SS* 156). Hegel himself depicts the emergence of self-consciousness as a *return* from alterity: "But in point of fact self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from *otherness*" (*PhS* §167). For Hegel, self-consciousness describes a reflective viewpoint that places both self and world within a more comprehensive and unified perspective.

At the heart of this departure and return from alterity is the basic structure of *recognition*: "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (*PhS* §178). For Hegel, consciousness can only fold-back on itself, and thereby achieve the reflective dimension of self-consciousness by assimilating the distance of the Other. Thus, the genesis of self-consciousness is, at bottom, recognition: the appropriation of the Other's perspective on one's self. According to Hegel's narrative, however, the appropriation of the Other's perspective necessarily involves violence and subjugation, because the desire (*Begierde*)

propelling consciousness at this stage is not yet mediated by social institutions (universals). It therefore remains essentially egocentric.¹⁶

As a result, the Other is reduced to a moment of mediation that *draws out the self*, thereby inserting a reflective distance within the self, and then serves a *return to the self qua identity*—thereby reconstituting a higher unity of the self:

Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self (*PhS* §179).

This first moment speaks to the “narcissistic wounding” referred to by Benhabib, in which the externality of the Other ruptures the simple independence and containment of consciousness,¹⁷ while in the second moment the Other is posited as an inessential being that is nothing more than the source of the self’s reflection. It is through this positing of the Other as inessential that the self preserves the self-certainty of its independence: “But for Hegel there is a moment of identity which overcomes difference by “appropriating” it, by pretending the “other” is something merely posited (*etwas gesetzt*) which the one self-identical subject presupposes (*vorausgesetzt*)” (*SS* 15). Moreover, this phenomenological reduction of the Other to a *mere means* for serving the “recovery” of the self initiates the process in which the material subjugation of the Other as *servant* takes place.

According to Hegel, then, the alterity of the Other occupies an essentially conflicted status as the de-centering event *and* the means for retrieving the self as centre. It is only qua independent subject that the Other has the power to de-centre, and yet, it is only by

¹⁶ According to Hyppolite’s reading of Hegel: “Love does not dwell sufficiently on the tragic nature of separation,” which means that “[t]he movement of recognition, thus, will manifest itself through the opposition between self-consciousnesses” (*CSHP* 164).

¹⁷ “For the other is equally independent and self-contained, and there is nothing in it of which it is not itself the origin” (*PhS* §182).

reducing the Other to “an unessential, negatively characterized object”(PhS §186) that the self can regain itself as independent and self-equal. Thus, the Other as inessential is, on the one hand, merely a point of mediation, and yet on the other hand, is the true pivot or “turning point” of consciousness:

The movement of self-consciousness, without which it would not exist, requires otherness, that is, the world of consciousness which in this way is preserved for self-consciousness. But it is preserved not as a being-in-itself, as an object which consciousness passively reflects, but as a negative object, as the object which must be negated in order that through this negation of the being-other self-consciousness establish its own unity with itself.¹⁸

However, since this dynamic displacement and return occurs in each consciousness and across both directions, Hegel claims that “[t]hey recognize themselves as *mutually recognizing one another*” (PhS §184). This preliminary dyadic stage of mutual recognition is essentially unstable, because it subsists in a vacuum prior to genuine sociality. That is, it lacks the background universality of “spiritual” institutions. At the level of the unmediated particular, such a face-to-face confrontation means that each self-consciousness is for the Other only what the Other is for it, that is, grasped only in terms of being-for-each-other, since they have not “exposed themselves to each other in the form of pure being-for-self, or as self-consciousness” (PhS §186). As a result, neither consciousness can tolerate its own reflection as an object/thing in the eyes of the Other, and thus each must strive to “rid itself of its self-externality” (PhS §187).¹⁹ But in order to fully negate its being-for-the-Other

¹⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, 158; hereafter indicated as “GSHP.”

¹⁹ In his essay, “You Can't Get There from Here,” Robert B. Pippin argues that the conflict with the Other concerns an alternate conception of the world: “Hegel is implying that the kind of resistance offered by another self-consciousness to the realization of my desires in the world (and so the kind of test or challenge to my self- and world-conception raised by such a subject) is of a qualitatively different sort than that posed by normal objects” (*The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* 67-8). However, on my reading, Hegel's analysis unfolds on a more primitive and abstract onto-

and reveal the truth of its subjectivity as pure negativity and freedom, each consciousness must enact its freedom by staking its life in a conflict that "seeks the death of the other" (*PhS* §187).

According to Hegel, this life-and-death conflict emerges as a double mediation: Firstly, with respect to the self, the self must prove to itself that its essence lies in being-for-self, that is, as *becoming* rather than as mere *being*. Thus, consciousness must risk the immediacy of its particular form in order to win the truth of its freedom: self-consciousness must rise above its immersion in life. Secondly, with respect to the Other, the self desires the Other's death, because it must retrieve the alterity of itself from an immediate relation of simple negation, the experience of itself as an object, and thus come to "regard its otherness as a pure being-for-self or as an absolute negation [as pure subject]" (*PhS* § 187). However, since the full culmination of a conflict unto death would nullify the possibility of the truth of recognition, the struggle resolves into two opposed modes of consciousness, namely, the victor as "master" and the defeated as "servant."

The strength of Hegel's account is that, unlike Kant, he not only places alterity within the domain of interaction, but he also introduces, between subject and subject and between subject and labour, the paradoxical mutual dependency that the independence of the self and Other implies. In other words, independence itself depends on the resistance of the Other.

The problem is that Hegel conceives of this resistance in terms of an essential hostility vis-à-vis the Other. Thus, it is conceived as a resistance that must be eliminated,

genealogical level; one that is ontologically too basic to possess the capacities required for having a "self-" or "world-conception." On my view, the realization of self-consciousness in Hegel's narrative depicts the condition for the possibility of having a self-conception in any sense at all. However, I agree with Pippin that another consciousness offers a resistance of a qualitatively different sort than "normal" objects, but this resistance concerns the way in which the very face of the Other's can reflect the self (to itself) in its otherness.

rather than a resistance to which we must creatively adapt. It is a dynamic of suppression, rather than a dynamic of creative learning. In Hegel's narrative, it is only within a relation of enslavement that the servant learns and acquires skills. For our purposes, it is interesting that the resistance of the real upon which the servant labours offers an occasion for learning, while the resistance of the Other does not offer such an occasion.

Indeed, the real force of his account within the ensuing history of phenomenology concerns the way in which Hegel's essential characterization of the relation between self and Other as *antagonistic* has gone unchallenged. Almost without exception, the model of the Other as "threat" has become the received departure point for theorizing about alterity. Even those marginal discourses that identify themselves as "Other" uncritically accept their role as a *threat* to the integrity of the Same. In doing so, they supply the Same with a justification for their continued marginalization. In one sense, then, such discourses remain within a cloud of false consciousness.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* is, at bottom, an epistemological account, wherein the Other occupies a place with respect to clarifying the justificatory conditions for the possibility of knowing. Thus, the Other remains subjugated by the will to truth, which is reflected in the fact that self-consciousness is *desire* (§174). Moreover, as *desire*, self-consciousness "is characterized by a necessary otherness" (*GSH* 162), while at the same time it must aim at achieving self-selfsameness by either negating or appropriating alterity: "it [otherness] exists, but soon it will no longer exist; its truth is to be consumed and negated, in order that self-consciousness might gather itself up through this negation of the other" (*GSH* 160).

The aftershock of alterity, therefore, requires the emergence of Stoicism, which passively negates alterity (indifference) by withdrawing into the self-certainty of self-will,

and Skepticism, which actively negates alterity (nihilism) by making it vanish. The discontented marriage of the two, which is unhappy consciousness, attempts to realize its unity first in self-subsistent independence, work and enjoyment, and then in ascetic self-sacrifice wherein self-consciousness renounces its property, enjoyment, and freedom to the priest.²⁰ Here, it is possible to break-off our analysis of Hegel, because it has brought us to the basic categories informing Levinas's thought about alterity. In anticipation of our return to Levinas, it is worth locating the specific sites in Hegel's analysis of the unhappy consciousness that serve as departure points for Levinas's thinking about alterity. Levinas initiates his analysis with a focus on "enjoyment" (*jouissance*) as the delineating the accomplishment of self-sufficient independence of the Same, while the second stage of self-sacrifice reveals itself in his notion of "substitution" before the height of the Other, that is, the sacrificial declaration—"me voici."

3.4 The Other as "Ego": Husserl and *Einfühlung*

The heart of Husserl's response to the question of the Other is to be found in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*: "Uncovering the Sphere of Transcendental Being as Monadological Intersubjectivity" (§42-§62).²¹ However, rather than deal with the entirety of the fifth meditation, I shall concentrate on the key phenomenological analysis in §50:

²⁰ Given the interests of this account, I am simply bracketing the first mode of unhappy consciousness, namely, the relationship to itself of self-feeling and the pure heart, which is prior to work and enjoyment.

²¹ Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana 1: Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*. S. Strasser. Ed. Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950, and in English, Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, §42/89; hereafter indicated as "CM" followed by the section number and then the page number referencing the English translation.

Let us assume that another man enters our perceptual sphere. Primordially reduced, that signifies: In the perceptual sphere pertaining to my primordial Nature, a body [*Körper*] is presented, which, as primordial, is of course only a determining part of myself: an "immanent transcendency." Since, in this Nature and this world, my animate organism [*Leib*] is the only body that is or can be constituted originally as an animate organism (a functioning organ), the body over there, which is nevertheless apprehended as an animate organism, must have derived this sense by an *apperceptive transfer* [*Übertragung*] from my animate organism, and done so in a manner that excludes an actually direct, and hence primordial, showing of the predicates belonging to an animate organism specifically [*der spezifischen Leiblichkeit*], a showing of them in perception proper. It is clear from the very beginning that only a similarity connecting, within my primordial sphere, that body over there with my body can serve as the motivational basis for the "analogizing" apprehension of that body as another animate organism (CM §50/110-1).

In many ways, this brief passage summarizes the transcendental theory of empathy (*Einfühlung*) forming the basis of Husserl's theory of monadological intersubjectivity, which in turn serves as the epistemic linchpin for his theory of objectivity.²²

The operative notion of "primordially" designates the "sphere of ownness" (*Eigensphäre*) that remains after the transcendental reduction, which unlike the eidetic reduction does not merely suspend the "natural attitude"²³ but brackets any intentional meaning implicating Others: "we disregard all constitutional effects of intentionality relating immediately or mediately to alien [*fremde*] subjectivity and delimit first of all the total nexus of that actual and potential intentionality in which the ego constitutes *within*

²² "[I]t [the transcendental theory of empathy] contributes to the founding of a transcendental theory of the Objective world" (CM §43/92). Despite the moral tenor implied in the language of "empathy," this transcendental theory is not marshaled for the sake of developing a transcendental ethical theory, but for the sake of founding the objectivity of the world in intersubjectivity. Thus, for Husserl, the alterity of the Other is significant to the extent that it is a transcendental condition for scientific knowledge.

²³ Husserl defines the "natural" or "naïve" attitude as "straightforwardly living toward whatever objects are given, thus toward the world-horizon, in normal, unbroken constancy, in a synthetic coherence running through all acts" (*Crisis* 144). And before that in 1907, Husserl writes in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, "The natural attitude of mind is as yet unconcerned with the critique of cognition" (Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Trans. William P. Alston & George Nakhnikian. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1990, 13.

himself a peculiar ownness" (trans. mod., CM §44/93). More concretely, the reduction abstracts from everything that is alien including "all cultural predicates," everything "alien-spiritual" [*Fremdgeistigen*] the very "characteristic of belonging to the surrounding world," and even the characteristic of "experienceable by everyone," which attaches to world-objects (CM §44/95).

Via the reduction, Husserl isolates those pure intentional modes *uninfected* by the alien, and thereby divides the immanence of the concrete factual ego into two spheres, namely, the pure "founding" sphere (monad), and the intersubjective sphere as "founded." With this division, Husserl brings the "problem" of the Other to its sharpest point, and thereby clarifies the sense of what he must demonstrate: "a path from the immanency of the ego to the transcendency of the Other" (CM §42/89). As a further consequence, however, Husserl's theory rests on a fundamental asymmetry between the privileged ego as the actively constituting power and everything else as the passively constituted, which is then defined in terms of impurity, derivativeness, and dependency.

The appearance of another's physical-body (*Körper*) within the transcendentially reduced sphere remains merely an "immanent transcendency," as it is merely a "determining part of myself," namely, a feature of experience appearing in "this Nature and this world," which is to say in my Nature and my world (CM §50/110). Whereas the factual ego performing the reduction remains outside of the distinction it enforces, the transcendental ego remains solely within the strict immanence of the Same.²⁴

²⁴ One of the key problems of Husserl's starting point is that he considers the "factual ego" as derivative of the "transcendental ego," despite the fact that transcendental ego is an abstraction from the concreteness of the factual ego.

Consequently, the problem of alterity becomes a matter of how the Same produces the sense of difference *within and for itself*²⁵: “the ego (as the transcendental onlooker experiences him transcendently) constitutes within himself the distinction between Ego and Other Ego” (CM §44/93 fn.). In the end, meaningfulness becomes coextensive with the economy of my ego, while the sense of “animate-body” (*Leib*) refers exclusively to my body. The Other’s body can at best *share* in the sense “animate-body”—a sense that truly *belongs* to my first-hand acquaintance with my own body.

Husserl utilizes the phenomenological notion of an “apperceptive transfer” as the key to understanding how otherness can be projected into a domain that has been methodologically and definitionally restricted to my ownness. That is, from whence is it possible that the Other has eluded the purification of everything alien:

How can my ego, within his peculiar ownness, constituted under the name, “experience of something alien [Fremderfahrung],” precisely something alien—something, that is, with a sense that excludes the constituted from the concrete make-up of the sense-constituting I-myself, as somehow the latter’s analogue? (trans. mod., CM §44/94).

Rather ironically, the appearance of alterity depends on a more primordial appearance of sameness, which is why Husserl claims that “from the beginning [...] only a similarity” connects my primordial sphere with the Other’s body over there. Husserl defines this original institution of similarity as “pairing” (*Paarung*), wherein two (or more) objects become prominently associated²⁶ within a passive

²⁵ From the outset, Husserl develops the problem in such a way that diversity remains grounded in the unity of the Same, which then operates as a surrogate for real difference and a robust alterity.

²⁶ Husserl distinguishes between “*primal form of that passive synthesis* which we designate as “*association*,” in contrast to [the] passive synthesis of “*identification*” (CM §51/112). However, while association implies difference, the “logic” of this pairing is governed by similarity and sameness, while differences are backgrounded as irrelevant. Hence, Husserl’s caveat regarding the mutual overlaying of sense “so far as moments of sense actualized in what is experienced do not annul this transfer with the consciousness of ‘different’ [*Anders*]” (CM §51/113). Husserl fails to

synthesis, and thereby “simultaneously intended [...] a living mutually awakening and overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other” (CM §51/113). This foundational pairing between my physical-body and the other physical-body²⁷ forms the “motivational basis” for perceiving the Other’s animation, or what Husserl calls the “‘*analogizing*’ apprehension.” In other words, it is the primitive congruence in perception between the two physical-bodies (B = B’) that is the ground for the sense-projection that this other body is animate like mine.²⁸ Hence, it is not that anything alien has eluded the purification of the transcendental reduction, but that the Other is reinstated *because she is sufficiently like me*.

Husserl is clear that such an “apperceptive transfer” is not a deliberative judgment, but an act of meaningful perception within an already familiar world:

Apperception is not inference, not a thinking act. Every apperception in which we apprehend at a glance, and noticeably grasp, objects given beforehand—for example, the already-given everyday world—every apperception in which we understand their sense and its horizons forthwith, points back to a “*primal instituting, [Urstiftung]*” in which an object with a similar sense became constituted for the first time (CM §50/111).

address the problematic fact that it is the monological economy of the Same that evaluates, which differences are irrelevant.

²⁷ Note that here I say only “the other physical-body” and not “the Other’s physical-body,” because at this primitive level of associative pairing the Other has not been analogically projected into this body that looks like mine.

²⁸ Theunissen makes the point that the primal pairing association must be given originally between my physical body [*Körper*] and the physical body of the Other, and *not*, as Husserl actually states, between my animate body [*Leib*] and the physical body of the Other, because the difference between the experience of inhabiting my living body and perceiving the Other’s physical body are of such wholly different kinds. It is then on the basis of the pairing of the two physical bodies that the order of “animateness” is then analogically transferred to the sense of the Other’s body (TO 65).

At bottom, this transfer of sense is motivated according to a horizontal understanding that interpretively anticipates the world. It is precisely this pregivenness of the world that ensures we see "things" rather than "raw" sense data.²⁹

Furthermore, it is significant that this analogical apperception of the Other stands out as a unique mode of appresentation (*Appräsentation*), as Husserl distinguishes between the mode of appresentation specific to physical objects and that mode specific to animate bodies. Whereas the possibility of directly verifying the appresented backside of a physical object is in principle always available, the parallel possibility with respect to verifying the "inwardness" of the animate-body of the Other is necessarily unavailable: "Appresentation of this sort [physical objects] involves the possibility of verification by a corresponding fulfilling presentation (the back becomes the front); whereas, in the case of that appresentation which would lead over into the other original sphere, such verification must be excluded a priori" (CM §50/109). However, for Husserl, this inability to achieve direct experience of the psychic life of the animate body (*what it is like* to be the Other) is not an obstacle, but the primordial source of difference introducing genuine alterity into the sense-experience of the Other.³⁰ Indeed, it is on the basis of this unique mode of appresentation that Husserl defines the boundaries of the Same: "Whatever can become originally presented and evidently verified is something *I* am; or else it belongs to me as peculiarly my own" (trans. mod., CM §52/114). The remainder is marked off as Other: "Whatever, by virtue thereof, is experienced in that founded manner which characterizes a

²⁹ It is for this reason that Husserl notes that "On a more precise analysis we find essentially present here an intentional overreaching, coming about *genetically*" (italics added, CM §51/112-3). Husserl cannot simply rely on a static analysis in order to make sense of apperception; rather he must provide a "genetic" account that introduces a history of meaningful, sense-laden experience.

³⁰ The essential difference of the Other is later explicated (§54) in terms of the somatically-oriented distinction between the organizational centre of my world as occupying the "Here," whereas the Other exists in the mode of being "There."

primordially unfulfillable experience—an experience that does not give something itself originally but that consistently verifies something indicated—is ‘alien’” (trans. mod., CM §52/114-5).

Since the alterity of the Other cannot be verified originally and directly in a fulfilling presentation, Husserl offers “harmonious behavior” as that style of verification unique to the Other. Thus, while the original pairing is based on the experience of the Other “*looking like me,*” the verification and continual enrichment of the content of the Other is based on the experience of the Other “*acting like me.*” At the crudest level, such verification *points* to the Other’s subjectivity (qua animated-body) despite its necessary absence as a direct presentation. This original reference is the basis upon which harmonious experience *fleshes out* the Other so-to-speak, by continually “furnish[ing] new appresentational contents” (CM §54/119). Consequently, the associative pairing with the physical-body of the Other unfolds in a “livingly effective manner” [CM §51/112], such that the *hypothesis* of Other qua animate-body is both confirmed and systematically filled in.³¹

From the standpoint of this alterity critique, the strength of Husserl’s account concerns the relationship between the Other and my own self-understanding. For Husserl, understanding the Other successfully implicates my self as fused within the associative pairing, and thereby entails that each new understanding of the Other “uncovers my own psychic life in its similarity and difference and, by bringing new features into prominence,

³¹ It is worth noting given the overall concern of this study that to the extent that the Other actually diverges from myself as *the* primary “model” of what constitutes an animate organism, the Other is recast as a “pseudo-organism”: “The organism becomes experienced as a pseudo-organism, precisely if there is something discordant about its behavior” (CM §52/114). At the relatively primitive level of “animate organism,” this concern about my being the basis for establishing what is or is not discordant behavior is not particularly problematic, but at the higher orders of psychic life there exists a definite danger in my privileged place as the standard of the “normal” within interpersonal relationships.

makes it fruitful for new associations" (CM §54/120). Consequently, the Other becomes an integral part of my own self-understanding and a model for novel possibilities for living.

On the other hand, Husserl's theoretical motivations stem from the need to absolve transcendental phenomenology from the charge of solipsism: "When I, the meditating I, reduce myself to my absolute transcendental ego by phenomenological *epoché* do I not become *solus ipse*" (CM §42/89). There is no doubt that, for Husserl, the question of the Other appears primarily in the guise of an epistemological problem demanding the proper phenomenological foundation, in order to account for scientific objectivity in terms of our intersubjective relation to the world. Given Husserl's overarching project of grounding scientific inquiry, there is no moral question of "difference," but only an epistemological problem of "sameness." That is, the problem of a consistent and verifiable experience of one and the same world.³²

Moreover, Husserl develops his theory on the basis of a radical ontological separation (Kant) between self and Other, only to re-introduce subsequent layers of social meaning (Hegel) in order to salvage the self from solipsism. Much like Descartes' "hyperbolic doubt," Husserl's "reduction" severely fractures reality, and then appeals to Other(s) in order to recover the fullness of experience. Given Husserl's conception of phenomenology at the time of the *Meditations*, such a radical separation is methodologically necessary if he is to demonstrate that phenomenology can recover intersubjectivity and objectivity from the pure ground of the transcendental ego. But the result is that the difference between self and Other that has been amplified at the

³² Thus, from the beginning Husserl's analysis of the Other implicates the world, however, it is Heidegger that integrates Otherness and the world, which we will address in the next section vis-à-vis Heidegger's analysis of the Nothing.

methodological level phenomenologically disappears into the absolute unity and immanence of the monad: the Other is reduced to immanent transcendence.³³

Thirdly, the logic of Husserl's account remains thoroughly structured by a theological sensibility wherein the founding "Ego" occupies an absolute position parallel to that of God as the ultimate surveying perspective ("God's eye view"), as constituting all transcendence ("World-Creator") and conferring all sense ("Light-Giver"). What is more is that it is on the basis of a likeness to its own image (*Leib*) that the Ego bestows animateness to the inanimate body (*Körper*) of the Other ("Life-Giver").

Fourthly, Husserl's conception of appresentation is determined by a drive for closure (will to truth), and therefore imposes a presumption of sameness on experience: "An appresentation occurs even in external experience, since the strictly seen front of a physical thing always and necessarily appresents a rear aspect and *prescribes for it* a more or less determinate content" (italics added, *CM* §50/109). In contrast to the notion of *intimation* that is a central component of this study's positive account, the prescribing of determination characteristic of *appresentation* is motivated by an uncritical assumption of sameness, and thereby appropriates a comprehensive and (more or less) determinate totality based on a logic of identity. Intimation as a concrete intentional mode, on the other hand, does not require adequate givenness or complete meaning-fulfillment, rather it attends to the indeterminate and surplus content that cannot be made explicitly co-present.

³³ "Every overlapping-at-a-distance, which occurs by virtue of associative pairing, is at the same time a fusion [*Verschmelzung*] and therein, so far as incompatibilities do not interfere, an assimilation, an accommodation of the sense of the one member to that of the other" (*CM* §54/118). Given the centrality, however, of the transcendental ego and the constitutive structure of founding-founded in Husserl's phenomenology, it is not clear to me that the notion of such a *mutual* "accommodation" makes any sense.

Fifthly, and perhaps most tellingly, Husserl's conception of the transcendental ego as foundational within phenomenology guarantees a one-way dependency between the founding power of the Same and the derivativeness of the founded Other:

In this pre-eminent intentionality there becomes constituted for me the new existence-sense that goes beyond my monadic very-ownness [...] The second ego, however, is not simply there and strictly presented; rather he is constituted as "alter ego"—the ego indicated as one moment by this expression being I myself in my ownness. The "Other," according to his own constituted sense, points to me myself; the other is a "mirroring" of my own self" (CM §44/94).³⁴

Despite his struggle to account for genuine alterity, Husserl's commitment to a foundational epistemology prevents the Other from occupying anything but a derivative status in relation to the Same. Thus, in the end, Husserl's position remains ensnared in the Cartesian legacy that his *Meditations* are simply intended to honour.

3.5 The Other as "World": Heidegger and *das Nichts*

There are a number of places one could locate Heidegger's engagement with alterity, the most obvious being his discussion of "Being-with-Others" (*Mitsein*). Here, however, I want to restrict the focus to his analysis of Nothing (*das Nichts*) in §40 of *Being and Time* and in his 1929 essay, *What is Metaphysics?*³⁵ To my mind, the bulk of Heidegger's statements with respect to *Mitsein* concern a derivative mode of being-with in which the uniqueness of the individual Other is concealed by a vague relation to "the They" (*das*

³⁴ This passage from Husserl's *Meditations* resonates quite strongly with Kant's description in the *Critique of Pure Reason* regarding the presentation of "thinking beings": "Now through no outer experience, but solely through self-consciousness, can I have the least presentation of a thinking being. Hence objects of that sort are nothing more than the transfer of this consciousness of mine to other things, which thereby alone are presented as thinking beings" (CPR 386/ B 405).

³⁵ All quotations from "What is Metaphysics?" are from Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. Ed. David Farrell Krell. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1977; hereafter indicated as "BW" followed by the page number for the English translation and the page number for Martin Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1931.

Man). Even more importantly, however, the irruption of Nothing upon the world confronts a more radical alterity in both scope and implication. The Nothing reveals an alterity that cannot be tamed by the coping powers of Dasein or by the consolation of Others: "The 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others" (BT §40/187). Moreover, in Heidegger the question of the alterity of Nothing is, in principle, absolute alterity, because it cannot be meaningfully appropriated by the Same.³⁶ In short, Heidegger's description of the emergence of the Nothing details a process in which the *totality of significance* is breached:

Here the totality of involvements of the to-hand and the at-hand discovered within-the-world, is, as such, of no consequence; it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance (trans. mod., BT §40/186).

As with Levinas's focus on the Infinite, which cannot be made an object and thereby explodes the grip of intentionality, Heidegger argues that the Nothing ruptures the intentional structure: "For thinking, which is always essentially thinking about something [Intentionality], must act in a way contrary to its own essence when it thinks of the nothing" (BW 99/11).

Moreover, this dissipation of significance is explicitly connected to the impotence of the will to truth: "Anxiety 'does not know' what that in the face of which it is anxious is" (BT §40/186). That is, the alterity of the world as the Nothing lies beneath Dasein's knowledge-making projects, which are founded upon the integrity of an already meaningful world. The Nothing marks an experience that is essentially anathema to the

³⁶ In his 1943 "Postscript" to "What is Metaphysics?", Heidegger characterizes *das Nichts* as "other than beings," Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*. Ed. William McNeill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 238.

will to truth: "We know [*wissen*] it, the nothing, in that we wish to know nothing about it" (*BW* 98/10).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger reverses the direction of Husserl's problem of solipsism, in that his analysis begins with Dasein as socially founded by a ubiquitous publicity (intersubjectivity). For Heidegger, then, the problem is no longer how to transcend a monadic sphere of ownness in order to establish an intersubjective world, but how to escape drowning in the wash of intersubjectivity so as to stake out the possibilities of *my* ownmost Being-in-the-world. Moreover, Husserl's theoretical anxiety about *overcoming* solipsism is replaced by Heidegger's existential anxiety, which *discovers* solipsism: "Anxiety individualizes Dasein and thus discloses it as '*solus ipse*'" (*BT* §40/188).

The experience of the Nothing is twofold in that it reveals my dependency, while at the same time individualizing me. It brings Dasein face-to-face with its own nothingness, its death, which then acts as the lens through which its possibilities are brought into focus. Thus, the alterity of the Nothing forces Dasein to explicitly appropriate its possibilities, which means that Otherness gathers us before our selves:

The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an *alien* voice. What could be more alien to the "they," lost in the manifold "world" of its concern, than the Self which has been individualized down to itself in uncanniness and been thrown into the "nothing?" (*BT* §57/277).

In this passage, Heidegger effects yet another reversal: it is the individualized "self" of the Nothing that shows up as alien to the "they-self" of sociality. Beyond this distinction, however, there is still a further order of alterity unique to this individualized self.

Heidegger's notion of uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) points to the fact that the Nothing punctures the featureless familiarity of Dasein's home-world and renders it alien.

Like an earthquake (or better still a worldquake), the upsurge of Nothingness effects a radical transformation of Dasein's world—a de-structuring that leaves Dasein homeless. It is precisely by not being at home in the world, by being wrenched out of its tranquilized familiarity, that Dasein discovers a moment (*Augenblick*) in which to step-back and appropriate specific possibilities as its own. The Nothing wakes Dasein up from the slumber of everydayness. In this sense, the alterity of the Nothing, as that which provokes wakefulness, anticipates the alterity of the Face in Levinas. In "From Consciousness to Wakefulness," Levinas argues that alterity provokes a vigilance more awake (ethical attention) than the lucidity of phenomenology's theoretical attitude (epistemic attention):

In awakening, between the Same and the Other there is shown a relationship irreducible to adversity and conciliation, alienation and assimilation. Here the Other [*Autre*], instead of alienating the uniqueness of the Same that he troubles and holds, only calls the Same from the depths of himself toward what is deeper than himself; there where nothing and no one can replace him. Would this already be toward responsibility for the other [*autrui*]? (*OGW* 24).

For both Heidegger and Levinas, alterity is the icy splash of water that calls us into existential perspicacity or moral vigilance, respectively. It confronts us with our self, and renders us accountable for the selves that we are.³⁷

In a further overturning, the "existential" *epoché* introduced by anxiety in Heidegger's existential phenomenology supersedes the "theoretical" *epoché* of transcendental phenomenology. Anxiety disrupts the natural or naïve attitude.³⁸ Rather

³⁷ It is interesting that for Levinas it is the critical presence of the face and/or proximity of the Other that puts us in question, while in Heidegger it is the Nothing: "The question of the nothing puts us, the questioners, in question" (*BW* 111/26).

³⁸ Indeed, Husserl's description of the natural attitude in the *Crisis* approaches Heidegger's conception of *Verfallen*: "[the natural attitude] is that of straightforwardly living toward whatever objects are given, thus toward the world-horizon, in normal, unbroken constancy, in a synthetic coherence running through all acts. [...] The pregiven world is a horizon that includes all our goals, all our ends, whether fleeting or lasting, in a flowing but constant manner [...] We, the

than a transcendental ego holding the world in suspension, the Nothing holds *Dasein* in suspension, and instead of securing the ego qua foundation, the Nothing pulls the ground out from beneath us. Ultimately, genuine being-in-the-world means being-in-the-midst-of-Otherness. The paradox of being is that authenticity is *founded* on alterity, which is to say on Nothing.

In a parallel fashion, Heidegger's conception of truth as disclosure necessarily involves revealing *and* concealing. This equiprimordiality reflects the fact that beings participate in the alterity (Nothing/Being/World) that is the condition for the possibility of presence (beings). In the same way in which the alterity of the world as Nothing makes *Dasein's* ownmost possibilities of being-in-the-world present, the alterity of the Nothing as world ensures that concealing remains the constant companion of revealing. Thus, for Heidegger, alterity haunts our world.

One of the significant upshots of Heidegger's analysis is that world is both *Grund* and *Abgrund*, both Being and Nothing. Much of his claim to overcome metaphysics, and thereby to complete the Nietzschean project, lies in the fact that the Nothing/Being/World-structure reveals that there is no onto-theological foundation. In short, *nothing* lies behind the world. At the same time, however, Heidegger's conception of "anticipatory resoluteness" avoids a wholesale collapse of meaning into nihilism. In the face of the Nothing (Alterity), we choose, which is to say retrieve, possibilities belonging to our history. The problem is that while he gives an account of authenticity in terms of *Dasein's* relation to its historically situated choices, Heidegger can give no normative meta-account of the process of *Dasein's* retrieval. To be sure, *Dasein* does not *create* value in choosing

subjects, in our normal, unbroken, coherent life, know no goals which extend beyond this; indeed we have no idea that there could be others" (*Crisis* 144).

(in this way Heidegger differs sharply from Sartre), but *commits* to already existing values. Nevertheless, Heidegger can say nothing about the responsibility of this historical pilfering. While conscience calls Dasein to self-responsibility for making its own choice, *after which* Dasein can be held accountable in terms of what it has chosen, Dasein's sense of responsibility is, at bottom, a *consequence* of choice rather than the *source* of choice. Paralleling the conception of the good in Kant's ethics, Heidegger's authenticity is ultimately divorced from content.

Moreover, one of the central problems of Being as "care" (*Sorge*), which I see as particular to Heidegger's focus on Dasein as *homo faber*, is that his conception of referential totality is essentially instrumental. While the "in order to" network points in the end to the "for the sake of which" (*das Worumwillen*), namely Dasein's existence, it is not clear that Heidegger's account can ever provide for an ethical relation with and for the Other. The terminus of the referential network in the "for the sake of which" (intrinsic value) is grounded in the existence of a being whose existence can be an issue for it.³⁹ Indeed, Heidegger's emphasis on the essential "mineness" (*Jemeinigkeit*) of my death bleeds over into his entire account of meaning. There is an irreducible *monadic* aspect to Heidegger's conception of "for the sake of which." To be sure, at the level of our circumspective concern (*Besorgen*) meaning is irreducibly social: Dasein is thoroughly absorbed in the involvements of Others. But what about at the level of the "for the sake of which"? It seems to me that for the same reasons that death radically *individuates* Dasein it must also radically *separate* Dasein. Heidegger cannot give an account of anything but

³⁹ Clearly, Heidegger would reject any discourse about "value" as the residue of metaphysical thinking, as he did with Nietzsche, but my point does not depend on the choice of language, but on the *structural difference* between "in order to" relations and "for the sake of which" as the conclusion of such relations.

one's own Dasein as a locus of intrinsic value.⁴⁰ Even Heidegger's analysis of ecstatic historicality, which indicates Dasein's trans-individuality, only provides for an *impersonal* field of past possibilities in which Dasein takes its *personal* stand.

At the same time, Heidegger argues in "What is Metaphysics?" that "it [nihilation] discloses these beings in their full but heretofore concealed strangeness [*Befremdlichkeit*] as what is absolutely other—with respect to the nothing" (trans. mod., *BW* 105/18). Thus, it is through the confrontation with the groundlessness of the for-the-sake-of-which that other beings are disclosed in their radical alterity, and thereby become genuine sources of wonder:

Only because the nothing is manifest in the ground of Dasein can the total strangeness [*Befremdlichkeit*] of beings overwhelm us. Only when the strangeness of beings oppresses us does it arouse and evoke wonder. Only on the ground of wonder—the revelation of the nothing—does the "why?" spring before us. Only because the "why" is possible as such can we in a definite way inquire into grounds, and ground them (*BW* 111/26).

In the end, then, the question is: Can wonder and the question of the "why" secure an ethics? On my view, the appearance of Others qua radical alterity, and thereby as genuine sources of wonder, can provide a phenomenological departure point for ethics. However, if we remain strictly within Heidegger's account of care, the process of individuation qua death cannot account for the *uniqueness of the self as responsible* à la Levinas or a *responsibility towards uniqueness* à la Bodhisattva.⁴¹

⁴⁰"[B]ut tells us that entities within-the-world are of so little importance in themselves that on the ground [*Grunde*] of this *insignificance* of what is within-the-world; the world in its worldhood is all that still obtrudes itself" (trans. mod., *BT* §40/187).

⁴¹ While there are profound similarities between Heidegger's emphasis on death and certain Buddhist accounts, the authenticity realized by being-toward-death is not motivated within an already existing framework of commitment, i.e., a more fundamental (ethical) choice, such as the Bodhisattva Vow.

3.6 The Other as “Flesh”: Merleau-Ponty and Embodiment

In one of the last essays before his death, “The Intertwining—the Chiasm,” Merleau-Ponty presents his most sophisticated response to the question of the Other.⁴² Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of *flesh* (*chair*) marks a radical bid to circumvent the traditional impasse intrinsic to idealism and realism.⁴³ As such, he flatly rejects the subject-object dichotomy in favour of trying to articulate the interpenetration of subjectivity and world. He takes the coincidence of the Objective-body (sensible body) and the Phenomenal-body (sentient-body) as a clue to the subject’s deep immersion in the world: “This [openness to the world] can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part” (VI 133/176). Merleau-Ponty argues that the reversibility of the body as sentient-sensed demonstrates that the problem of *contact* with the world is ultimately a false problem, since it is a primal fact of our existence that as embodied subjects we straddle the subject-object divide. In Husserlian terms, subject and world are co-founding, which means that constitution is not a unilateral process from subject to world, but a bilateral process of mutual encroachment and determination. Therefore, on Merleau-Ponty’s view, the “problem of separation” and the corresponding “problem of access”

⁴² “The Intertwining- the Chiasm” appears in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Ed. Claude Lefort. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968; hereafter indicated as “VI” followed by the page of the English translation and the page number referring to the French edition, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l’Invisible*. Ed. Claude Lefort. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.

⁴³ For a brief discussion of the intrinsic problem of idealism and realism in relation to representation, see section 1.4 of the present study.

reflect uncritical presuppositions at the heart of Western metaphysical discourse, rather than genuine philosophical quandaries.⁴⁴

For Merleau-Ponty, the primordially of flesh and reversibility means that the Other is felt and also touches. This realization means that the existence of the Other is *felt* as a “force,” rather than merely *known* as a “theme.” The emphasis on seeing and being-seen, on vision and visibility, places the self and the Other in the world together, and admits to the vulnerability of the self before the Other. This same vulnerability, which is an openness or exposure to one another, is the condition for the possibility of our sharing the world with Others:

The handshake too is reversible; I can feel myself touched as well and at the same time as touching. [...] Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly: this is possible as soon as we make belongingness to one same ‘consciousness’ the primordial definition of sensibility, and as soon as we rather understand it as the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sense and of the sensed to the sentient. For as overlapping and fission, identity and difference, it brings to birth a ray of natural light that illuminates all flesh and not only my own. It is said that the colors, the tactile reliefs given to the other, are for me an absolute mystery, forever inaccessible. This is not completely true; for me to have not an idea, an image, nor a representation, but as it were the imminent experience of them, it suffices that I look at a landscape, that I speak of it with someone. Then, the concordant operation of his body and my own, what I see passes into him, this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades his vision without quitting my own (VI 142/187).

By challenging the Cartesian-Husserlian model in which the immanent interiority of consciousness opposes the exteriority of a transcendent world, Merleau-Ponty recasts the problem of intersubjectivity. Embodiment becomes the horizontal background from which the world and the Other are disclosed to me. I am not trapped inside my consciousness

⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that in one of his unpublished notes (November 1959), Merleau-Ponty also identifies the question of intersubjectivity as a distinctly Western phenomenon: “The I-Other problem—a Western problem” (VI 221/274).

and neither is the Other—we are in the world together. An already shared world serves as a common field integrating self-Other.⁴⁵ Hence, Merleau-Ponty's claim that we are embedded in a "vision in general" or "an anonymous visibility," which *inhabits us and in which we inhabit* (VI 142/187). This anonymous and generalized visibility represents another way of speaking about the world as an active field of sentience, rather than as reducible to a passive field of sensibles. For Merleau-Ponty, then, both world and body belong to orders of "physicality" and orders of "ideality."⁴⁶

However, while I agree with Merleau-Ponty that the "colors" and "tactile reliefs" given to the Other need not be "forever inaccessible," it is not clear to me that this refutation of solipsism addresses the basic ethical concerns regarding alterity⁴⁷: the question of how to accommodate the differences of the Other. Thus while "the Other's

⁴⁵ Here Merleau-Ponty offers a brief statement of the problem: "If it is already difficult to say that my perception, such as I live it, goes unto the things themselves, it is indeed impossible to grant access to the world to the other's perception" (VI 9/25). In light of this formulation, it becomes clearer to see how resolving the problem of *my* perception goes a long way towards solving the question of access to the Other.

⁴⁶ Ideality as it relates to world concerns the presumption of a totality transcending my limited perspective, and thereby includes a regulative function in which it coordinates a multiplicity of perspectives, as well as referring to conventional meaning-structures, e.g., social, cultural, linguistic orders of significance. Merleau-Ponty attributes a parallel conception of ideality to the body: "Is my body a thing, is it an idea? It is neither, being the mesurant of the things. We will therefore have to recognize an ideality that is not alien [*étrangère*] to the flesh, that gives it its axes, its depth, its dimensions" (VI 152/199). Note however that neither world nor body are ideality *all the way down*.

⁴⁷ Indeed, I would go further than Merleau-Ponty in suggesting that my sharing of the world with another is not simply a matter of a chiasm, but the constitution of a new form of intentionality, namely, it is not that I can share what the Other sees, but that *we can both see more* than we could alone. I believe that Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh is capable of supporting the notion of a social intentionality, which is not the mere aggregation of private intentionalities, but a structurally different mode of intentionality. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's notion of "anonymous visibility" begins to get at this idea, but in a somewhat negative fashion: "There is here no problem of the *alter ego* because it is not *I [moi]* who sees, not *he [lui]* who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits [*habite*] both of us, a vision in general, in virtue of the primordial property that belongs to the flesh, being here and now, of radiating everywhere and forever, being an individual, of being also a dimension and a universal" (VI 142/187-8).

world and mine are ambiguously the same and different,"⁴⁸ which explains why sensibility and communication with the Other is not mysterious, Merleau-Ponty fails to reflect on the difference between sensibility qua sensibility and sensibility qua significance. For example, whether or not the Other witnesses the same car accident as I at the level of *sensibility* does not answer to the difference in the *significance* of the accident for myself and for the Other. And yet, there are morally relevant differences between the horror of my witnessing an anonymous car crash and the horror of the Other witnessing her brother's car careen and tumble violently.

While it is true that his view can account for the fact that I see (non-inferentially) the "horror" directly in the face of the Other and the fact that there are interior horizons of the Other, which remain opaque to me,⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh qua reversibility cannot adequately differentiate between "thin differences," which operate under the symmetrical structure of reversibility (i.e., here vs. there), and "thick differences," which possess an essentially asymmetrical structure and are, therefore, irreversible (i.e., a stranger's crash vs. my brother's crash).⁵⁰ Indeed, since his primary level of analysis

⁴⁸ M. C. Dillon, "Écart: Reply to 'Flesh and Otherness'" from Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, eds. *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990, 16; hereafter indicated as "OA." Dillon's turn of phrase here is helpful because Merleau-Ponty does want to assert that we occupy the *same* world, at least globally speaking, while at the same time he recognizes that we occupy *different* positions within and perspectives on that world. To be precise, then, the ambiguity arises at the level of more localized experiences, assertions, beliefs, etc., about the world. It does remain unclear in Merleau-Ponty's account, however, as to the source of the presumption of a single, unified, world. It is unlikely that such a faith is attributable to an empirical realism, and yet, an account of unity based on intersubjective constitution is not open to Merleau-Ponty, because the unity of the world serves to ground his account of intersubjectivity. Whereas Husserl mobilized his theory of intersubjectivity in order to account for the objectivity of a unified world, Merleau-Ponty's project reverses that direction.

⁴⁹ "But what is proper to the visible is, we said, to be the surface of an inexhaustible depth: this is what makes it able to be open to visions other than our own. In being realized, they therefore bring out the limits of our factual vision, they betray the solipsist illusion that consists in thinking that every going beyond is a surpassing accomplished by oneself" (VI 143/188-9).

⁵⁰ The "body" as the phenomenological starting-point for Merleau-Ponty is both the source of his profound insight that transcends the body-neglecting philosophies of the past, but also the source of

concerns sensibility, Merleau-Ponty is unable to account for the difference between these two kinds of differences. Such distinctions require the complex integration of sensibility with *irreversible* orders of significance such as the contingencies of one's history, culture, relationships, etc. In relation to the question of the Other, however, it is precisely these thick differences that are central to moral response and these *irreversible* orders of significance that belong to the concrete uniqueness of the Other. This failure is a consequence of a philosophical orientation that is still primarily concerned with intersection of being and knowledge rather than beings and ethics.

In "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty," Levinas points out that while Merleau-Ponty does shift the modality of knowledge occupying the centre of his discourse, his thinking remains focused on knowledge: "Even if it [the pretheoretical structure] stands out in contrast to the noetic-noematic structure of idealizations, that structure is for Merleau-Ponty, already or still, knowledge, even if it is of an other modality" (OA 58). Consequently, Levinas questions Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis of the handshake: "In the handshake that phenomenology attempts to understand on the basis of mutual knowledge [*connaissance*] (even if it is the double touching), does not the essential, extending beyond knowledge [*le connaître*], reside in confidence, devotion, and peace" (OA 59).⁵¹ Here Levinas is addressing the fact that sensibility as the ground of Merleau-

a certain blindness with respect to the Other. The relationship between the phenomenal and objective bodies does not adequately parallel the relationship between my self and an Other. In this passage, Merleau-Ponty comes closest to confronting the failure of this parallel: "It is true that 'the things' in question are my own, that the whole operation takes place (as we say) 'in me,' within my landscape, whereas the problem is to institute another landscape. When one of my hands touch the other, the world of each opens upon that of the other because the operation is reversible at will" (VI 141/185).

⁵¹ Levinas's point here resonates deeply with what we will see is Watsuji's analyses of truth and trust in his *Rinrigaku* (Chapter 4).

Ponty's analysis is simply too austere to provide a sufficiently rich (or even historical) account of our relation to the Other.

There is, in addition, an ambiguity in Merleau-Ponty's account between an *epistemic foundationalism*, which takes the body as an exemplary paradigm of knowing: "its [the body] double belongingness [*appartenance*] to the order of the 'object' and to the order of the 'subject' reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders" (VI 137/181), and a *non-foundationalist, ontological* position that radically rethinks the very tissue of being so-to-speak: "fundamentally it is neither thing seen only nor seer only, it is Visibility sometimes wandering [*errante*] and sometimes reassembled" (VI 138/181). The foundationalist line of thought begins with the reversibility of the phenomenal and objective bodies, which serves as a check on the adequation of my knowing (*my inside*, phenomenal body) to the known (*my outside*, objective body). This privileged phenomenological position provides evidence of the fact that I genuinely possess knowledge concerning my objective body, which means that I can be confident that I do in fact adequately know all things of the same order as my objective-body. On this reading, the body functions as an "*exemplary sensible*," which begins to suggest an epistemological position concerning paradigmatic instances of knowledge, which then serve as the epistemic foundation for further acts of knowing: "[the body] a set of colors and surfaces inhabited by a touch, a vision, hence an *exemplar sensible*, which offers to him who inhabits it and senses it the wherewithal to sense [*de quoi sentir*] everything that resembles himself on the outside (VI 135/179).⁵²

⁵²This notion of "wherewithal" is unhelpful for resolving the ambiguity, because it is unclear as to whether this "wherewithal" refers to the existential-ontological situation and/or an epistemological foundation.

On the other hand, it is clear that Merleau-Ponty is struggling to articulate a position that sidesteps the logic of the foundationalist framework by appealing to an existential-ontological structure, which substitutes the notion of the *fold (pli)* for the notion of a *foundation*: “The flesh (of the world or my own) is not contingency, chaos, but a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself” (VI 146/192).⁵³

A further source of unease concerns a pervasive pattern of reasoning—one that we will see repeated in Sartre’s analyses. Merleau-Ponty continually assumes a dichotomy that is ultimately unjustifiable: “either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch it” (VI 148/194). It may be the case that he takes this dichotomy to be an implicit consequence of his conception of reversibility, however, Merleau-Ponty fails to explain why reversibility entails exclusivity. I suggest that this dichotomy reflects the remnants of a Cartesian dualism still haunting Merleau-Ponty’s conception of subjectivity, that is, a conception wherein the modality of subjectivity remains metaphysically opposed to the modality of the objective. Thus, while the notion

⁵³ I contend that this ambivalence stems from lingering philosophical habits relating to Merleau-Ponty’s struggle to steer a course between an empirical realism and a phenomenological idealism. As Nietzsche has taught us, one is inevitably defined by that against which one struggles. Since the realist-idealist debate is played out in terms of epistemic justification, I believe that Merleau-Ponty was simply drawn, at times, into the problematic framework motivating that discussion. Not only did Heidegger and Sartre recognize the absurdity of the debate, but they also explicitly recognized the fundamental inadequacy of logical argumentation for settling the realist-idealist question. In §43 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes, “If Dasein is understood correctly, it defies such proofs, because, in its Being, it already *is* what subsequent proofs deem necessary to demonstrate for it” (BT §43/205). In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre also rejects the possibility of *proving* or *refuting* the existence of the Other: “But the structure of the Other is on principle such that no new experiment will ever be able to be conceived, that no new theory will come to validate or invalidate the hypothesis of his existence, that no instrument will come to reveal new facts inspiring me to affirm or to reject this hypothesis. Therefore if the Other is not immediately present to me, and if his existence is not as sure as my own, all conjecture concerning him is entirely lacking in meaning” from Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Gramercy Books, 1956, 251; hereafter indicated as “BN” followed by the page number to the English tradition and the corresponding page number to the French edition: Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’Être et le néant. Essai d’ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943, 290.

of flesh is meant to integrate body-subject-world, these last vestiges of exclusivity remain as long as this integration is defined in terms of reversibility. At the same time, however, to the extent that the notion of flesh as reversibility works to subvert the metaphysical grammar of the intentionality thesis, it displaces the assumption of exclusivity.⁵⁴ Since it is clear the thought of “The Chiasm” has outrun his capacity (and time) to digest it, there are also moments in which Merleau-Ponty suggests a position that seems to lack this exclusivity: “I can feel myself touched *as well and at the same time* as touching” (VI 142/187 [italics added]).⁵⁵ Despite such examples, Merleau-Ponty’s characterization of flesh as “reversibility” concentrates on the opposition of sensibility and sensed that too easily leaves the subject-object dichotomy intact. Ultimately, it would have been interesting to see Merleau-Ponty complete the requisite critique of intentionality as a propaedeutic stage in the full maturation of his flesh ontology.

3.7 The Other as “Look”: Sartre and Shame

In its origin, Sartre’s conception of alterity is unquestionably Hegelian. Firmly rooted in the analysis of recognition belonging to the “Master-Servant” dialectic of the *Phenomenology*, Sartre’s analysis of the “look” not only serves as reminder of Hegel, but as

⁵⁴ According to Gary Brent Madison, Merleau-Ponty’s efforts at theorizing an ontology of flesh represent just such an attempt to radically recast the intentionality thesis: “It is thus a wholly new notion of intentionality, of the subject-object relation [...] He wants to make of the subject-object relation a *derived* relation which itself occurs within Being and which therefore can be understood only in relation to Being” from Gary Brent Madison, *Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, 188.

⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty comes closest to tackling this ambiguity in his thought where he writes, “To be sure, one can reply that, between the two ‘sides’ of our body, the body as sensible and the body as sentient [...], rather than a spread [*écart*], there is an abyss that separates the In Itself from the For Itself” (VI 136-7/180). In his notes, December 1959, Merleau-Ponty writes: “where I say that I see the other, in fact it especially happens that I objectify my body, the other is the horizon or other side of this experience—It is thus that one speaks to *the other* although one has only to do with one self). Against the doctrine of contradiction, absolute negation, the *either or*—Transcendence is identity within difference” (VI 225/278-9).

a reminder for the Hegelian narrative, which simultaneously documents and forgets the contribution of the Other. Hegel's dialectic is a history without memory.

Sartre credits Hegel with fully grasping the nature of the solution to solipsism:

"Hegel's brilliant intuition is to make me depend on the Other *in my being*" (BN 237/276).

But despite this "brilliant intuition," Sartre contends that Hegel's analysis fails because of his idealistic identification of being and knowledge: "Nevertheless it is certain that this ontological problem remains everywhere formulated in terms of knowledge [*connaissance*]" (BN 238/277). It is due to this conflation that Sartre brings a "twofold charge of optimism" against Hegel, namely, a charge of *epistemological optimism* and a charge of *ontological optimism*. In the first instance, Sartre points to Hegel's conviction "that an objective agreement can be realized between consciousnesses—by authority of the Other's recognition [*reconnaissance*] of me and my recognition of the Other" (BN 240/279). In the second case, Sartre contends that Hegel presumes an impossible standpoint on being: "For Hegel indeed truth is truth of the Whole. And he places himself at the vantage point of truth—i.e., of the Whole—to consider the problem of the Other" (BN 243/282). According to Sartre, Hegel's conflation of ontological and epistemological orders, and its resulting optimism, ultimately reflects an unrestrained drive towards totalization: "Hence is derived an *ontological optimism* parallel to the *epistemological optimism*: plurality can and must be surpassed toward the totality" (italics added, BN 243/282).

In the wake of the *Phenomenology's* failure, Sartre makes his own return to Hegel's "brilliant intuition." Unlike Hegel, however, Sartre claims that the problem of the Other cannot be approached as a problem of knowledge, because "the being of my consciousness is strictly irreducible to knowledge" (BN 243/282). For Sartre, the real

import of Hegel's intuition lies in the implication of the Other at the level of my *being*, which entails that the problem of the Other is thoroughly ontological in nature⁵⁶: "if we are to refute solipsism, then my relation to the Other is first and fundamentally a relation of being to being, not of knowledge to knowledge" (BN 244/283). Thus, the refutation of solipsism cannot be of the order of a discursive argument, rather it must be a "proof" of a different sort.

Sartre is explicit about the requirements for any adequate theory addressing the existence of Others. Firstly, he argues that it cannot be a matter of another abstract proof or a matter of probability.⁵⁷ Secondly, since it is not a question of refutation, such a theory must explicate the implicit affirmation of the Other's being as a pre-ontological certainty belonging to my everyday existence.⁵⁸ Thirdly, such an explication must discover the *existence* of the Other within the sphere of my own being.⁵⁹ His phenomenological analysis of *shame* provides Sartre's point of departure for engaging the problem of recognition, the "look," and our being-for-Others.

⁵⁶ On Sartre's view, Husserl falls prey to the same epistemological prejudice as Hegel: "Consequently, the only way to escape solipsism would be here again to prove that my transcendental consciousness is in its very being, affected by the extra-mundane existence of other consciousnesses for the same type. Because Husserl has reduced being to a series of meanings, the only connection which he has been able to establish between my being and that of the Other is a connection of *knowledge*. Therefore Husserl cannot escape solipsism any more than Kant could" (BN 235/274).

⁵⁷ See the quotation from *Being and Nothingness* in Footnote 53 above.

⁵⁸ "I have always known that the Other existed, that I have always had a total though implicit *comprehension* of his existence, that this "pre-ontological" comprehension comprises a surer and deeper understanding of the nature of the Other and the relation of his being to my being that all the theories which have been built around it" (BN 251/290).

⁵⁹ "In my inmost depths [*au plus profond de moi-même*] I must find not *reasons for believing* that the Other exists but the Other himself [*lui-même*] as not being me" (BN 251/291). To be precise, Sartre refers to the *Cogito* rather than "the sphere of my own being," even though this focus on the *Cogito* undermines his critique of the centrality of epistemology. Although Sartre understands the *Cogito* as an affirmation of existence, one cannot ignore the fact that originally the *Cogito* established an *epistemological* foundation for an *epistemological* project. The *Cogito* answers to merely a heuristic, methodological doubt, and not the kind of robust existential doubt that relates to Sartre's interest in existence. For a sustained discussion of existential versus methodological doubt, see Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.

Sartre asks us to imagine a scenario in which we are motivated by jealousy, curiosity, or vice, to listen to a door and peer through its keyhole. Because our jealousy motivates and organizes this activity, Sartre contends that we do not *know* ourselves as jealous, but that in a very direct sense we *are* jealousy. By this, Sartre is pointing to the fact that we are glued to the spectacle on the other side of the door. We are, quite simply, engrossed. As Sartre puts it, our consciousness “sticks” to the act; there is no “outside” to our activity of eavesdropping—that is until we are seen:

But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! [...] It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure—modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the reflective *cogito* (BN 260/299).

Thus, for Sartre, “[i]t is shame or pride which reveals to me the Other’s look and myself at the end of the look. It is the shame or pride which makes me *live*, not *know* the situation of being looked at” (BN 261/300). Our own de-centering is made most clearly manifest within the phenomenon of shame, although, in general, Sartre holds that another subject always has the capacity to de-centre our gaze. For Sartre, this decentralization prompted by the Other challenges my grasp on the world: “The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting” (BN 255/295). In this decentralization, the Other shatters my anonymity and wrenches me into a different order of accountability. She discloses aspects of my being that can only be revealed *Other-wise*, that is, a plane of self-revelation that necessarily depends on encroachment of the Other. Indeed, the real strength of his account is Sartre’s assertion that the Other reveals me *as I am*, not in the mode of consciousness (for-itself), which in

transcendence flees into its nothingness, but in the mode of the in-itself as the Other fixes my transcendence, substantiates an outside, and confers upon me a nature.

Although his own account of responsibility originates in the radical freedom that belongs to consciousness, Sartre's analysis of shame includes a second suppressed mode, which is to say an Other-mode of responsibility. That is, the Other exacts a responsibility that, strictly speaking, does not originate with the freedom of my choosing, but with the presence of the Other. Sartre places the significance of recognition on a thoroughly moral plane. For Sartre, I am *recognized*, which is to say that in being seen, stripped of my invisibility, I lose the armor of my anonymity. I am called into my vulnerability in order to become accountable before the Other.

In the solidification of my transcendence before the Other, I am forced to account for the history of my choices, my possibilities and my projects. My freedom is momentarily arrested and assessed. The futural aspect of my being becomes lit-up in terms of my history of realized and unrealized possibilities. Sartre's claim that consciousness is always radically free from the history of its choices is true only within solipsism. What Sartre fails to address is that his own analysis of shame repudiates this radical freedom: shame is neither a choice nor a project, it is mode of accountability. Through the Other's "look," we confront a social memory that gathers together who I am with what I have done.

While Sartre maintains that I freely choose the weight I attach to critical presence of the Other, and thereby confer a value to the Other's evaluation, such a position reduces the "look" of the Other to a mere "view" on the Other. Here, Sartre falls into the Hegelian error of conflating being and knowledge. If the critique of the Other was merely a sort of *proposition*, then a distance would be inserted that would support my ability to choose my

relation vis-à-vis the critique. But the brute shock of shame is an *imposition*, and as such it speaks against any such voluntarist interpretation of our Being-for-Others. It refutes the vanities of Cartesian of self-possession and self-transparency, and thereby reinvigorates the insight that I am not the ground of my own being. Indeed, the power of Sartre's analysis of shame is that it fulfills Hegel's "brilliant intuition" by revealing that I depend on the Other in my very being. The upshot of this success is that Sartre cannot distance the self from the Other's critique, because it issues from within my very being. It is this fact that ultimately gives force and content to the notion of the Other as a "critical presence." The look of the Other makes me see that *I am* responsibility-for-Others.

A further difficulty within Sartre's account, is that, like Merleau-Ponty, he presumes a fundamental mutual exclusivity between the modes of being-a-subject and being-an-object— an assumption that presupposes that these two modes are already discrete. Sartre's exclusivity assumption is, on the one hand, attributable to an implicit residual Cartesianism, which holds that subjectivity and objectivity belong to distinct ontological orders, and as such are mutually exclusive. On the other hand, it is also attributable to Sartre's explicit Hegelianism, which takes our relation with the Other to be essentially defined by conflict and hostility. Within such an antagonistic logic of struggle, one cannot be both the victor (subject) and the defeated (object). Thus, it is Sartre's adoption of Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic, that is the more immediate basis for Sartre's framing of intentionality in terms of "either-or," rather than in terms of "both-and":

I cannot therefore direct my attention on the look without at the same stroke causing my perception to decompose and pass into the background. There is produced here something analogous to what I attempted to show elsewhere [*The Psychology of the Imagination*] in connection with the subject of the imagination. We cannot, I said then, perceive and imagine simultaneously; *it must be either one or the other* [italics added]. I should willingly say here: we cannot perceive the world and at the same time apprehend a look fastened upon us; it must be either one or the other. This is because to perceive is to *look at*, and to apprehend a look is not to apprehend a look-as-object in the world (unless the look is not directed upon us); it is to be conscious of *being looked at* (BN 258/297-8).

Sartre simply fails to address the fact that my subjectivity endures in the fact that I am “conscious of being looked at.” Outside of restricted situations of shame or pride, for example in conversation, the Other’s look does not reduce me to an object, because the receptivity of listening comes alongside the look.⁶⁰ Together we look and listen to each other rather than *at* each other, in such a manner that our mutually interpenetrating subjectivities constitute the conversational field. In contrast, Sartre would have us believe that a conversation subsists like a tennis match with a constant back-and-forth struggle of recognition and oscillation between occupying the subject-role and then object-role.

Sartre’s position is further complicated by the ironic fact that it is through this Hegelian prejudice that he ultimately ends up on Kantian ground. Sartre’s faith in the mutual exclusivity of subjectivity and objectivity leads Sartre to assert that a fundamental abyss separates my self from an Other:

Between the Other and myself *there* is a nothingness of separation. This nothingness does not derive its origin from myself nor from the Other, nor is it a reciprocal relation between the Other and myself. On the contrary, as a primary absence of relation, it is originally the foundation of all relation between the Other and me (BN 230/269).

⁶⁰ The conspicuous co-existence of looking and listening in conversation is of paramount importance. When I look at the Other listening intently, it is impossible to reduce the Other to an object. To see this “listening intently” is to encounter the Other qua subject in the midst of my speaking and looking, that is, in the midst of my assertion of subjectivity.

In essence, Sartre's ontological conception of consciousness is simply projected up to the level of intersubjectivity, despite the fact there is no good reason to recur this same structure in his social ontology. The consequence is not only that the same irreducible gap recurs dividing self and Other but, worse still, the "logic" of the structural parallel dictates that the privileged position of the for-itself be mapped on to the self (freedom), while the Other is assigned the derivative status of the in-itself (essence).

3.8 The Other as "Gendered": de Beauvoir and the Feminine

In her groundbreaking work, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir's introduces gender into the discussion of the Other.⁶¹ Her detailed socio-historical analysis recounts how women have been framed negatively as man's Other, and therefore in principle have occupied a derivative status. Like Sartre, De Beauvoir assumes a fundamentally Hegelian conception of alterity grounded in a hostile relation towards the Other. Such a conception *must* view the Other as derivative in order to suppress the threat that she poses to my centrality as subject:

At the moment when man asserts himself as subject and free being, the idea of the Other arises. From that day the relation with the Other is dramatic: the existence of the Other is a threat, a danger. Ancient Greek philosophy showed that alterity, otherness, is the same thing as negation, therefore Evil. To pose the Other is to define a Manichaeism (*S. Sex* 84/134).

To be sure, the relation between patriarchal power and "the feminine" has been essentially antagonistic, and de Beauvoir's historical and psychoanalytic treatments of the position of women within society vividly demonstrate the fact that women have been "negated" as

⁶¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Ed. and Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; hereafter indicated as "*S. Sex*" followed by the page number for the English translation and the corresponding French editions: Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe I. Les Faits et Les Mythes. II. Le Expérience Vécue*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

such. However, the coherence of the underlying model of alterity is what I take to be questionable, particularly given de Beauvoir's own distinctions with respect to alterity.

On de Beauvoir's view, there exists a fundamental breach between what might be characterized as an "inclusive alterity" (moral considerability) and an "exclusive alterity" (moral irrelevance). In her distinction between these "two forms of alterity or otherness," she refers to moral exclusion as "absolute alterity" and capitalizes "Other" in order to mark it off as a mode of exclusion. For de Beauvoir, it is "absolute alterity" that places women outside the domain of moral considerability. Or to use her language, the realm of the human:

To say that woman was the *Other* is to say that there did not exist between the sexes a reciprocal relation: Earth, Mother, Goddess—she was no fellow creature in man's eyes; it was *beyond* the human realm that her power was affirmed, and she was therefore *outside* that realm (*S. Sex* 74-5/122).

The domain of the human is then functionally equivalent to the domain of the male, because it has been enforced by the male as *his* sovereign territory:

For the male it is always another male who is the fellow being, the other who is also the same, with whom reciprocal relations are established. The duality that appears within societies under one form or another opposes a group of men to a group of men; women constitute a part of the property which each of these groups possesses and which is an instrument of exchange between them (trans. mod., *S. Sex* 75/122).

However, de Beauvoir's distinction between an *other* and an absolute *Other* is not rooted in the concreteness of phenomenological description; rather, it is the function of a history of metaphysical descriptions.⁶² Thus, relative and absolute alterity designate inclusion or exclusion with respect to the realm of the fully human (moral considerability) as they have

⁶² See the brief discussion of Charles Taylor's claims with respect to the relationship between "metaphysical descriptions" and moral considerability in section 1.1.2 of the present study.

been determined by the contingencies of a metaphysical history.⁶³ It is my contention that a concrete phenomenological account supplies the requisite vantage for reproving the atrocities justified by an epoch's "commonsense."⁶⁴ In other words, while it has been the case that women have been viewed as "less-than-men," we need to be able to demonstrate that such a view is unsustainable. An adequate phenomenological account of alterity—which de Beauvoir's critique is obviously presuming—is capable of fulfilling the prescriptive dimension of her critique in a way that simply rehearsing a history of metaphysical descriptions and their associated evils cannot.

A further consequence of the Hegelian model of alterity is that de Beauvoir argues for the mutual exclusivity of these two modalities:

The error has come from a confusion of two forms of alterity, which are *rigorously exclusive* in point of fact [italics added]. To the precise degree in which woman is considered as the absolute Other—that is to say, whatever her magic powers, as the inessential—it is to that degree impossible to regard her as another subject. Women, therefore, have never composed a separate group set up *for itself* [pour soi] over against male groupings. They have never entered into a direct and autonomous relation with the men (trans. mod., *S. Sex* 75/122).

According to de Beauvoir, it is the systematic mystification of woman that has placed them beyond the world, often as supernatural e.g., witches, and thus beyond the scope moral consideration, e.g., the witch trials. Hence, entrance into the domain of moral considerability requires the demystification of women. What de Beauvoir points to as the loss of her "mystic aura":

⁶³ Clearly, for de Beauvoir, this is not "contingent" in any strong sense, but the expression and fulfillment of patriarchy. However, if we are to have any political and ethical hope for a post-patriarchal society, we must be committed to the fact that the institution of patriarchy is contingent, and that things could have been, and therefore can be, otherwise.

⁶⁴ Obviously, this "commonsense" and the "contingencies" of history is not neutral, but structured according to various deployments of power, which in this case could be grouped under "patriarchy" as the interpretive centre.

The epochs that have regarded woman as the *Other* are those which refuse most harshly to integrate her with society by right of being human. Today she can become an *other* who is also an equal only in losing her mystic aura. The antifeminists have always played upon this equivocation. They voluntarily accept the exalting of woman as the *Other* in such a manner as to make her alterity absolute, irreducible, and to deny her access to the human *Mitsein* (trans. mod., *S. Sex* 75, fn 2/122 fn. 1).

However, de Beauvoir's own account suffers from an equivocation. Elsewhere she argues that the moral exclusion of woman is based on their reduction to the mundane status of a possession, a thing, while what "dignity" women have enjoyed she locates in their mystic aura: "But this will is ambiguous: by complete annexation woman would be abased to the rank of a thing; but man aspires to clothe in his own dignity whatever he conquers and possesses; the Other retains, it seems to him, a little of her primitive magic" (trans. mod., *S. Sex* 85-6/135-6). This realization betrays the fundamental flaw in the Hegelian model that begins with absolute alterity, ends with relative alterity, and structures the relation between the two in terms of exclusion.

The recognition of a thing is the recognition of relative alterity, that is, the simple awareness that I comprehend (possess) this thing, but know it as "*not me*"-and-*nothing-more*. The recognition of a human being is the recognition of absolute alterity, that is, the complex awareness that I do not comprehend (do not possess) this person, but I know that she is *more-than-just*-"*not me*." Moreover, it is nonsensical to see these two modalities as mutual exclusive, because every thing is *more-than-just*-"*not me*," while at the same time we always stand in some relation of comprehension to experience. Strictly speaking, the recognition of "*not-me*" is the recognition that there is more to a thing than what is available within the immediate horizon of immanence (absolute alterity), while the recognition that there is more than what is given within the immediate horizon of immanence depends on what is immanently given (relative alterity). The relation between

relative and absolute alterity is never dichotomous, but *spectral*. Thus, de Beauvoir comes closer to the truth when she writes, “true alterity—otherness—is that of a consciousness separate from mine and identical with mine” (trans. mod., *S. Sex* 147/237). Moreover, de Beauvoir’s account of erotic love offers a further correction:

Under a concrete and carnal form there is mutual recognition of the ego and of the other in the keenest awareness of the other and of the ego. [...] These are evidently inexact expressions, for the dimension, the relation of the *other* still exists; but the fact is that alterity has no longer a hostile implication, and indeed this sense of union of really separate bodies is what gives its emotional character to the sexual act. [...] it is the more overwhelming as the two beings, who together in passion deny and assert their boundaries, are similar and yet unlike. This unlikeness, which too often isolates them, becomes the source of their enchantment when they do unite (*S. Sex* 422/189).

However, de Beauvoir’s Hegelian commitments prompt her to ultimately oversimplify, and therefore distort, the movement from erotic desire to intimacy: “Eroticism is a movement toward the *Other*, this is its essential character; but in the deep intimacy of the couple, husband and wife become for one another the *Same*; no exchange is any longer possible between them, no giving and no conquering” (*S. Sex* 469/257). It is, quite simply, false that “deep intimacy” is the resolution of a relationship into sameness. Rather it is in and through intimacy that a robust alterity fully emerges. Those to whom we are closest are precisely those whose alterity is most concretely and vividly “present.” In contrast, strangers on the street appear as relative and generalized others with an alterity that is presumptive, abstract, and one-dimensional. Furthermore, the sinking of a relationship into mundane familiarity (sameness) is accompanied by a corresponding decline in genuine intimacy. The problem is that de Beauvoir’s account is structured according to two basic premises of Hegel’s account: 1) that sameness and otherness are mutual exclusive, rather than mutually interpenetrating, and 2) therefore the *Other* is necessarily a

threat to the Same. This is not to say that the Other cannot be a threat to the Same, just that the Other is not to be functionally defined as negation.

Indeed, de Beauvoir is quite right to claim that it is qua absolute alterity that a woman can be the source of fear, but the mistake is that fear and moral considerability are in no way mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is not coincidental that “awe” means reverence *and* dread and “respect” means admiration *and* deference. De Beauvoir’s analysis comes closest to recognizing this when she writes: “it is as the fearsome other that he seeks to make her more profoundly his—and this is what will bring him to elevate her to the dignity of being a person and lead him to recognize in her a fellow creature” (*S. Sex* 178/280). Fear is not anathema to dignity and respect, but belongs in an essential way to moral consideration. The example par excellence is the Christian God of the Old Testament, who is the source of both profound fear and profound love: one is God-loving if and only if one is God-fearing. Indeed, contra de Beauvoir, I suggest that the moral exclusion of women (as well as others in history) has been predicated on an absence of power on the side of the Other, and therefore on an absence of fear on the side of the Same. Moral exclusion has always presupposed the capacity of controlling and/or neutralizing the power of the excluded. Thus, at the political level efforts at securing moral inclusion have involved a sufficient demonstration of power, and it has been those demonstrations of power most difficult to neutralize that have been most effective in achieving moral inclusion.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Again, I suggest that the moral courage of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. is an example of “power” that was virtually impossible to neutralize, because it refused to operate on the same level as the power (i.e., physical force) used to neutralize it. Similarly, the power of a martyr has always resided in the fact that physical force alone is utterly incapable of negating it.

3.9 The Other as "Meeting": Buber and the Thou

Buber's distinction between the I-It and I-Thou relation is of paramount importance when considering the problem of moral disclosure. Buber's notion of the dialogic nature of encountering the Other focuses on a primordial relatedness that is broken by derivative modes of the I-It relation. Consequently, on Buber's view dialogue precedes the very possibility of any monologue. Buber uses the concrete context of dialogue as evidence of the primordial mutual interpenetration binding I-Thou.

The basic problem with Buber's account lies in the mediation of the Absolute Thou lurking in the background of the meeting. Such a perspective provides a universal viewpoint that totalizes an otherwise open relation. But despite this deficiency from the standpoint of a naturalized account, Buber's phenomenological insights are extremely important:

I consider a tree. I can look on it as a picture: stiff column in a shock of light, or splash of green shot with the delicate blue and silver of the background. I can perceive it as movement [*Bewegung*]: flowing veins on clinging, pressing pith, suck of the roots, breathing of the leaves, ceaseless commerce with earth and air—and the obscure growth itself. I can classify it in a species [*Exemplar*] and study it as a type in its structure and mode of life. I can subdue its actual presence [*Diesmaligkeit*] and form so sternly that I recognize it only as an expression of law—of the laws in accordance with which a constant opposition of forces is continually adjusted, or of those in accordance with which the component substances mingle and separate. I can dissipate it and perpetuate it in number, in pure numerical relation. In all this the tree remains my object [*Gegenstand*], occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution.

It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is no longer *It*. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness [*Die Macht der Ausschließlichkeit*]. To effect this it is not necessary for me to give up any of the ways in which I consider the tree. There is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I would have to forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and type, law and number, indivisibly united in this event. Everything belonging to the tree is in this: its form and structure, its colours and chemical composition, its intercourse with the elements and with the stars,

are all present in a single whole. The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination [*Vorstellung*], no value depending on my mood; but it is bodied over against me, as I with it—only in a different way. Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of the relation: relation is mutual. The tree will have a consciousness, then, similar to our own? Of that I have no experience. But do you wish, through seeming to succeed in it with yourself, once again to disintegrate that which cannot be disintegrated? I encounter no soul or dryad of the tree, but the tree itself (*IT* 7-8/13-14).⁶⁶

In this passage, Buber begins by juxtaposing a variety of representational standpoints, which is to say relational stances⁶⁷ as available articulations of the tree. By arraying these various modes of approach, Buber makes it clear that each distinct mode gives the tree differently. On the one hand, Buber is simply reiterating the intentional thesis of classical phenomenology: every noematic content correlates to a particular noetic act. In Buber's particular examples, the pictorial mode of relation corresponds to an aesthetic mode of attention as "looking," the chemical-physical mode of relation requires "subduing" the particular presence of the tree in order to attend to the universal laws of which the tree is an expression, while the mathematical mode of relation corresponds to the highly abstracted and idealized mode of attention, which "dissipates" the concrete existence of the tree so as to relate to it qua number. On the other hand, however, Buber is saying more than what is simply expressed by the intentional thesis. Whereas the intentional thesis focuses on *givenness*, Buber draws our attention to the *exclusiveness* that accompanies it. There are two ways of understanding this "power of exclusiveness" that

⁶⁶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*. Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958; hereafter indicated as "*IT*" with the page numbers of the English edition followed by the page numbers referencing the German edition—Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*. Köln: Jakob Hegner, 1966.

⁶⁷ It is my view that representational standpoints reflect existential-phenomenological stances, since each representational schema corresponds to a specific range of intentional acts. As studies in the sociology of knowledge and standpoint epistemology have shown, representational standpoints reflect particular interests and possibilities of interaction, and therefore need to be understood as rooted in corresponding existential-phenomenological commitments. Even more broadly, Nishitani argues that representational standpoints as *such* are predicated on the standpoint of reason as the prevailing style of human coping with the world.

are differing emphases surrounding the same basic point. On the one hand, this exclusiveness refers to the *unique* grip of this new relation with the tree, that is, the way in which *this* meeting, *this* betweenness, and *this* relation (rather than this ego) comes to occupy the centre of experience. On the other hand, this exclusiveness affects the recognition of a more derivative exclusion, namely, the exclusion intrinsic to the objectifying mode of consciousness. Somewhat paradoxically, the exclusiveness of the *I-Thou* relation, as an *intimate* relation, actually constitutes a more inclusive background against which the exclusion effected by the *I-It* pseudo-relation is revealed. It is precisely this exclusion performed by the *I-It* pseudo-relation that is the systematic exclusion of the other qua Other.

Each articulation of the tree is a form of determination, that is, a negation in which a single mode of attention gains precedence. In other words, articulation purchases clarity or distinctness through a systematic narrowing of perspective: an *intentional restriction*. Thus, while each of these standpoints of articulation is valid and gives the tree in a definite way, there always remains a background of the inarticulate, the irrelevant, the surplus that cannot be assimilated according to the specific logic of explication determined by a *giving* standpoint. In short, there is always that which is *excluded* by a particular "vocabulary" of articulation. At the fringes of the noetic act (conscious attention) and the focal noematic content (explicit sense), there exists a background of noetic play (unconscious attentions) and noematic context (implicit sense) constituting the suppressed and inarticulate experiential surplus excluded by the intentional restriction.⁶⁸ To be "seized by the power

⁶⁸ I initially employ the polar concepts of noesis and noema in characterizing this intimated horizontal background as it is helpful to distinguish the plurality of awarenesses remaining operative behind the restriction of focal consciousness and the horizontal aspects of worldhood behind the appearance of the focal noema. However, despite this provisional characterization, it is more accurate to understand the background subtending the focal noesis-noema correlation as a highly-

of exclusiveness," then, involves the encroachment of an alterity that had heretofore been suppressed by the drive towards givenness (will to truth). Consequently, exclusion is not a matter of identifying the inadequacy of a particular standpoint, but the deeper awareness that articulation, as such, is exclusionary.

By turning to a less technical form of the intentional thesis, namely that consciousness is always "consciousness of," the fundamental prejudice of phenomenology surfaces: "in all this the tree remains *my object* [italics added]." Each of the disparate modes of attention cataloged by Buber share a common *intentional prejudice*, namely, they each engage the world qua object. This primary phenomenological determination forms the common logical basis from which distinct intentional modes differentiate themselves and gain further determinacy. Buber's language of the "I-It" (*Ich-Es*) relation serves as an umbrella term for any intentionality structured according to the subject-object opposition: an external relation that presumes the self-sufficient and independent existence of a self willfully engaging an estranged world. Moreover, in the spectrum Buber provides, there is a clear sense in which the immediate and unique presence of *this* tree eventually disappears as the modes of approach move increasingly behind and beyond it. The immediate density of the tree's concrete and unique existence progressively gives way to an abstract and singular aspect (*eidos*) of the tree as merely a transparent instance of a universal.

In contrast to the objectifying tendencies of mundane intentionality, Buber offers the ground-word (*grundwort*) "I-Thou" as a way of characterizing a primordial pre-

integrated, nondualistic horizon. Whereas the focal noesis-noema correlation is dualistic as a consequence of its abstractness and narrowness of attention, the unity of the background horizon resides in the deep integration of embodiment, practices, and tacit understandings. On Buber's view, the fundamental integration of this deep-relationality and wide-intentionality serves as the transcendental condition for the positing of more superficial relations and narrower modes of intentionality.

relatedness, which challenges the exclusive engagement with the world qua object. In the *I-Thou* relation, the tree is no longer disclosed as an *It*, but as a *Thou* to whom I am *already* in relation. Such a transfiguration does not describe a newfound respect by a magnanimous “I,” who voluntarily bestows the status of a *Thou* upon the tree from on high, but a qualitative conversion (revelation) of the relation in which we already stand. In other words, the relation itself as ontologically and ethically primary, rather than the constituting “I,” gives the *Thou*. Hence, the emergence of a *Thou* is an event predicated on my becoming “bound up in relation” with the tree, such that the tree “is bodied over against me [...] in a different way.” It is an event of both “will and grace,” which is to say that it cannot be realized by my will alone, but requires *the grace of the relation already gripping us*. Indeed, Buber flatly denies that any technology of the self—e.g., meditation and practice—can have a role in convening the meeting:

For everything that has ever been devised and contrived in the time of the human spirit as precept, alleged preparation, practice, or meditation, *has nothing to do with the primal, simple fact of the meeting...it all has its place in the world of It and does not lead one step, does not take the step, out of it* (italics added, *IT* 77/93-4).

And yet, to ignore the long history of meditative practices appears shockingly presumptuous in light of the fact that such practices have been credited with realizing a primordial relation with Others closely approximating Buber’s “meeting.”

In order to make sense of this claim without resorting to a simple dismissal of Buber, it is worth considering whether Buber is simply recognizing a problematic similar to the one at the centre of the Zen and True Pure Land Buddhist debate, which concerns the merits and limitations of “self-power” (*jiriki* 自力) and “Other-power” (*tariki* 他力).⁶⁹ In

⁶⁹ This distinction between self-power and Other-power parallels Buber’s distinction between “will” and “grace.”

brief, Pure Land Buddhists argue that the Zen reliance on self-power represents a cloaked egoism undermining the full realization of Amida Buddha's compassion. We will return to consider this issue more systematically within the context of the thought of Tanabe Hajime. Unfortunately, Buber fails to say enough in order to be able to conclusively assess whether he is expressing such a concern or whether he is simply disregarding such practice-centred traditions, and what he does say remains ambiguous.⁷⁰

Whereas the *I-It* (noesis-noema) correlation is overtly available for thematization as detachable parts, the *I-Thou* pre-relation remains intimated horizontally in an original, non-dualistic relation that is given as the strict unity of the tree as a "single whole." It is this encounter of a single whole that contextualizes the narrow and derivative modes of relating to the tree, i.e., the aesthetic, biological, physical, or mathematical modalities of representation. This is why Buber does not see this primordial relationality as requiring the negation of more derivative relations such as averting one's eyes or forgetting any ways of knowing the tree. Rather, this pre-relatedness is the condition for the possibility of more restricted forms of encounter. In other words, the *I-Thou* relation does not falsify the truth belonging to *I-It* standpoints. Instead, it reminds us of the incompleteness of such partial

⁷⁰ For example, "Going out to the relation cannot be taught in the sense of precepts given. It can only be indicated by the drawing of a circle which excludes everything that is not this going out. Then the one thing that matters is visible, full acceptance of the present" (*IT* 77-8/94). This passage suggests a concern that approaches the exoteric/esoteric distinction in Buddhism, wherein only the way to enlightenment can be represented, while the strict immanence of enlightenment opposes the distance intrinsic to representation. At the end of the same section, Buber makes a claim that further differentiates his thought from Buddhism: "It is not the *I*, then, that is given up, but that false self-asserting instinct that makes a man flee to the possessing of things before the unreliable, perilous world of relation which has neither density nor duration and cannot be surveyed" (*IT* 78/94). Obviously, it is not a problem nor necessarily surprising that Buber makes such a departure from Buddhism, I am only suggesting that with such a departure it becomes even more difficult to evaluate his claim that practice and meditation "have nothing to do with the primal, simple fact of the meeting." Moreover, Buber's equivocation of meditation/practice with "precepts" suggests an idiosyncratic understanding of meditation and practice that collapses first-person, embodied disciplines to the status of third-person, disembodied beliefs. Buber's ambivalence towards practice is also surprising given his awareness of robust meditative practices in the Jewish tradition as well as in non-western traditions.

truths. Consequently, Buber holds that all of these derivative modes of relating to the tree become “indivisibly united in this event” and that “everything belonging to the tree is in this.” In a Zen-like articulation, Buber argues that the *I-Thou* relation does not express any particular mode of encountering the tree, but that in the *I-Thou* relation one encounters “the tree itself.”⁷¹

In the subsequent aphorism, Buber discusses this primordial “meeting” (*Begegnung*) in terms of an encounter with a human Other.⁷² In this “phenomenological” description, Buber holds that “I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*,” rather “I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the grounding word” (trans. mod., *IT* 9/15). According to Buber, the encounter with a *Thou* is not an experience as such, because such a meeting is not differentiated according to anything standing outside the relation: “In experience [*Erfahrung*] *Thou* is far away” (*IT* 9/15). For Buber, the language of “experience” implies a reflective distance that is not operative within the *I-Thou* meeting.

⁷¹ In his 1957 “Postscript” to the second edition of *I and Thou*, Buber provides a further elaboration of the tree’s wholeness of being: “The living wholeness and unity of the tree, which denies itself to the sharpest glance of the mere investigator and discloses itself to the glance of one who says *Thou*, is there when he, the sayer of *Thou*, is there: it is he who vouchsafes [*gewährt*] to the tree that it manifest this unity and wholeness; and now the tree which is in being manifests them. Our habits of thought make it difficult for us to see that here, awakened by our attitude, something lights up and approaches us from the course of being [*Seienden*]” (*IT* 126/148).

⁷² “If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the grounding-word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things. This human being is not *He* or *She*, bounded from every other *He* and *She*, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world; nor is he a nature able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. But with no neighbour, and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists other than himself: but that all others live in *his* light. Just as the melody is not made up of notes nor the verse of words nor the statue of lines, but they must be tugged and dragged till their unity has been scattered into these many places, so with the man to whom I say *Thou*. I can take out from him the colour of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be *Thou*. [...] I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*. But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the grounding-word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once again. In experience *Thou* is far away. Even if the man to whom I say *Thou* is not aware of it in the midst of his experience, yet relation may exist. For *Thou* is more that *It* knows. No deception penetrates here; here is the cradle of the Real Life” (trans. mod., *IT* 9/15).

Here, Gadamer's explicit differentiation between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* is helpful for explicating Buber's claims with respect to experience.⁷³ According to Gadamer, *Erfahrung* refers to a well-circumscribed experience demarcated against a background of past experience. It is the juxtaposition between *this* experience against our experience *in toto* that Gadamer sees as productive of knowledge: "If a new experience [*Erfahrung*] of an object occurs to us, this means that hitherto we have not seen the thing correctly and now know it better. Thus, the negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning" (TM 353). In contrast, *Erlebnis* describes the background stream of experience characteristic of our immersion in the life-world. Hence, Gadamer holds that *Erlebnis* maintains an "inner relation to life" (TM 67).

In view of this distinction, Buber is specifically denying that one experiences a *Thou* in the sense of "*Erfahrung*," since our "meeting" with a *Thou* is strictly immanent. Thus, when he claims that the *Thou* "fills the heavens" and that "all others live in *his* light" (IT 9/15), Buber's point is that the Other qua *Thou* does not gain significance from being "bounded" by, or made relative to, a meaning-giving schema. A *Thou* is not disclosed from within a pre-ordered framework, rather our meeting marks the determining perspective from which everything else is brought into focus. The transfiguration from *It* to *Thou* describes a fundamental shift from a world disclosed according to the standpoint of *I* to a world disclosed from the standpoint of *I-Thou*. Thus, at bottom, even the disclosure of

⁷³ My claim here is only that Gadamer's distinction between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* is useful for explicating Buber's controversial point regarding the mutual exclusivity of "experience" and the presence of a *Thou*. I am not alleging that Gadamer holds the same position as Buber vis-à-vis experience and the Other. Indeed, Gadamer argues that the Other constitutes a special kind of experience: "It is clear that the *experience* [*Erfahrung*] of the *Thou* must be special because the *Thou* is not an object but is in relationship with us" (TM 358). However, Gadamer's view that the *Thou* is not encountered in the mode of being an "object," as well as his emphasis on our "relationship" with the Other, is consonant with Buber.

my self is mediated by my meeting with the Other. From a moral standpoint, then, the *I-Thou* relation forms the absolute centre of significance around which everything gathers.

With respect to our question of the Other, the strength of Buber's position lies in the ontological, ethical, and phenomenological primacy he gives to relations. For Buber, the *I-Thou* relation is a genuinely internal relation, which is constitutive of the "relata" that subsequently emerge.⁷⁴ As such, the *I-Thou* relation differs dramatically from the substantialist conception of external relationality belonging to the *I-It* relation, wherein the *I* forms the constituting centre of a world of *Its*. In my meeting with the Other, the world is altered. Not only does the Other as *Thou* show up differently, but the world is given in view of our meeting.⁷⁵ Thus, on Buber's account, the Other transforms my overall relation to the world by rigorously drawing the *I* outside of itself. In other words, Buber presents a sweeping account of "socialization." Even more radically, however, Buber's model of socialization resists the chauvinism of anthropocentrism, because it includes a community of *Thous* not limited to human beings. On Buber's view, I am socialized by trees as well as human beings—by nature as much as by culture. With his focus on the primacy of relation, Buber destroys the myth of the self-containment of the *I*, and reveals the Other as the source of completion and authenticity. In the meeting, the self discovers its wholeness in the Other. The separation of *I* versus world (object) is bridged by the dramatic upsurge of being-in-relation with a *Thou*. In short, the *I* depends on the grace of the *Thou* in order to disclose and realize its authenticity.

⁷⁴ In reference to Buber's meeting, Theunissen writes "it lies in the essence of the intentional object that, in the *I-It* relationship, the *relata* precede the *relation*, even if only potentially [...] Conversely, however, the dialogical relationship [Buber's model] joins the relating terms together in a fateful manner because it first calls them into being (TO 281).

⁷⁵ Buber once again approaches a basic Mahayana Buddhist tenet, namely, the fundamental identity of *samsara* and *nirvana*, when he writes: "There is no illusory world, there is only the world—which appears to us as twofold in accordance with our twofold attitude" (IT 77/93).

It is where theology intrudes into his analyses that Buber's account becomes problematic, not because it is theological per se, but because it explicitly introduces a totalizing logic. According to Buber, it is God as the eternal *Thou* and the primordial Centre that mediates authentic community:

The true community does not arise through peoples having feelings for one another (though indeed not without it), but through, first their taking their stand in living in mutual relation with a living Centre [*Mitte*], and, second, their being in living mutual relation with one another (*IT* 45/56).

And again, "It is not the periphery, the community, that comes first, but the radii, the common quality of relation with the Centre. This alone guarantees the genuine existence [*echten Bestand*] of the community" (trans. mod., *IT* 115/136). On this view, the centrality of the *I-Thou* relation between finite particulars is relativized vis-à-vis the eternal *Thou*: "Every particular *Thou* is a glimpse through to the eternal *Thou*; by means of every particular *Thou* the grounding-word addresses the eternal *Thou*" (trans. mod., *IT* 75/91). In this shift to addressing the eternal *Thou*, Buber's dialogical model collapses into pseudo-dialogue: a speaking-to that is never a speaking-with. In dialogue, two limited perspectives overcome their individual limits without transcending finitude as such or achieving a totalized vision. I contend that mutual vulnerability, mutual discovery, and mutual self-transcendence are necessary conditions for genuine dialogue, and therefore must be logical possibilities of any given dialogue. And yet, all such mutuality is impossible with respect to the eternal *Thou*. Simply in terms of power, the difference between a finite *Thou* and the eternal *Thou* is so vast, that veneration, worship, and prayer supplant dialogue: address without response.

Even the notion of the "face" in Buber's thought is conceived as the face of God. Although he anticipates Levinas's attention to the moral significance of the face, relative

Thous in Buber's framework ultimately possess a derivative face that borrows on a likeness with the divine (*imago dei*). The eternal *Thou* as the only *Thou*, who by definition cannot be reduced to an *It*, occupies the ideal in relation to which all finite *Thous* are but mere shadows. God is the universal Face behind the appearance of many faces⁷⁶:

The eternal *Thou* can by its nature [*Wesen*] not become *It*; for by its nature it cannot be established in measure and bounds, not even in the measure of the immeasurable, or the bounds of boundless being; for by its nature it cannot be understood as a sum of qualities, not even as an infinite sum of qualities raised to a transcendental level; for it can be found neither in nor out of the world; for it cannot be experienced, or thought; for we miss Him, Him who is, if we say 'I believe that He is'— 'He' is also a metaphor, but 'Thou' is not (*IT* 112/132).

In the final analysis, the metaphysics of Buber's theology compromises the ethics of his dialogical philosophy. God remains the foundation of Sameness behind the plurality of different faces, communities, and particulars, and thereby the *real* source of authenticity, truth, and goodness. Thus, the alterity of the Other, as in Hegel's thinking, is ultimately absorbed into the Sameness of a comprehensive totality.

3.10 The Other as "Face": Levinas and the Infinite

In 1948, Sartre published a short but intriguing piece entitled *Visages*.⁷⁷ There, he concludes that "to be a visible transcendence is the meaning of the face" (*EiP* 163). This transcendence is temporal:

[T]he face, alert and inquisitive, is always ahead of the look I direct upon it [...] If I want to decipher the face, I must anticipate it, must aim at where it is not yet [...] a mist of futurity surrounds the face: its future (*EiP* 161).

⁷⁶ "Of course God is the 'wholly Other [*das ganz Andere*]'"; but He is also the wholly Same [*das ganz Selbe*], the wholly Present [*Gegenwärtige*]. Of course He is the *Mysterium Tremendum* that appears and overthrows; but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my *I*" (*IT* 79/95-6).

⁷⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Visages, precede de Portraits officiels*. Paris: Seghers, 1948. In English, the essay appears in Maurice Natanson, ed. *Essays in Phenomenology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969; hereafter indicated as "*EiP*."

And spatial:

His face is the motionless sliding of the furniture; his face is everywhere; it exists as far as his look can carry (*EiP* 162).

It is this “visible transcendence,” according to Sartre, that distinguishes the existence of a face from the existence of other mundane objects.⁷⁸

I have introduced Sartre’s phenomenology of the face, because it serves as a useful entrée into the phenomenological analysis of the face at the centre of Levinas’s ethics. The most pointed discussion of the face appears in the third section of *Totality and Infinity*, in which Levinas focuses on the relation between sensibility, ethics, and the Face. In “Sensibility and the Face,” the opening chapter of the third section, Levinas introduces the face as the “transcendent [that] cuts across sensibility” (*TI* 193/210). Like Sartre, Levinas argues that the face “leads us to a *relation totally different* from experience in the sensible sense of the term” (italics added, *TI* 193/211). In the subsequent chapter, “Ethics and the Face,” Levinas exposes and analyzes the normative force belonging to this absolute difference.

Levinas’s approach to the face is, strictly speaking, *post-phenomenological*, because the Other is not reducible to a noematic content. Metaphysically, the Other is an irreducible transcendence, while ethically, the face of the Other is an insurmountable resistance to the comprehension (negation) of the Same:

The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed. It is neither seen nor touched—for in visual or tactile sensation the identity of the I [*moi*] envelops the alterity of the object, which becomes precisely a content (*TI* 194/211).

⁷⁸ Sartre also notes that our own faces are transcendent even for us: “I do not see my own face—or, at least, not first. I carry it in front of me like a secret which I have not fathomed, and it is the faces of others, instead, which teach me what mine is like” (*EiP* 159). Our reliance on the faces of Others in order to grasp our own faciality speaks volumes about the fundamental intertwining of sociality and humanity.

Levinas uses the language of “epiphany” or “revelation,” rather than “manifestation” or “presence,” to denote the difference inherent in this encounter with a face: “*the idea of the other in me, we here name face*” (TI 50/43). The face overflows the grasp of intentionality and disables the power of “consciousness of.” Levinas connects the intentional surplus of the face to the “idea of infinity” in which the “infinitely more [is] contained in the less” (TI 196/213).⁷⁹ Levinas adopts this notion of the “idea of infinity”—an idea that we are acquainted with only through its essential transcendence (exteriority)—from Descartes’ ontological argument. It is this formal structure vis-à-vis transcendence, which guides Levinas’s thinking about alterity:

This relation of the same with the other, where the transcendence of the relation does not cut the bonds a relation implies, yet where these bonds do not unite the same and other into a Whole, is in fact fixed in the situation described by Descartes in which the “I think” maintains with the Infinite it can nowise contain and from which it is separated a relation called the “idea of infinity” (TI 48/40).

According to Levinas, the idea of infinity is “exceptional in that its *ideatum* surpasses its idea” and, furthermore, it is the “distance that separates the *ideatum* and idea here [which] constitutes the content of the *ideatum* itself” (TI 49/41). In other words, the idea of infinity exemplifies an intentionality of *transcendence as transcending*, that is, a content that is “infinitely removed” or exterior to its idea (TI 49/41). Similarly, Levinas argues that to think the Other is *not* to think an object, which is to say a content, because it has already moved beyond a thinking relation to an ethical relation.

The incapacity to absorb the Other into thought is what preserves the genuine exteriority of alterity, which is how “[t]he face resists possession, resists my powers” (TI

⁷⁹ Levinas juxtaposes the ideas of “totality,” in terms of epistemology as the complete comprehension and violent reduction of the Other to a theme, and “infinity,” in terms of ethics as the recognition of the surplus and (metaphysical) separation that the face of the Other expresses.

197/215).⁸⁰ Moreover, this resistance is not a form of violence against me, because it is not my negation. Rather, the resistance of the face constitutes a “positive structure,” which Levinas sees as the revelation of the “ethical” (TI 197/215). This ethical relation is the recognition of the impossibility of comprehension (non-relation), and therefore the negation of the power of power.⁸¹ Or as it is otherwise expressed in Levinas’s writings, a passivity that is more passive than the passivity opposing activity. In other words, the passivity of the face is absolute.

Concomitant with the passivity of the face, Levinas argues that discourse as “expression” reveals the Other as uncontainable content: “The formal structure of language thereby announces the ethical inviolability of the Other and, without any order of the ‘numinous,’ his ‘holiness’” (TI 195/213). Language *announces* the infinity of the Other that exceeds comprehension by *producing* (enacting) the limitlessness of expression. Consequently, the face—the idea of the Other in me—preserves an essential relationship to exteriority, because the face continually overflows itself in its self-expression. However, it is conversation and discourse that “relates with what remains essentially transcendent” (TI 195/212). According to Levinas, it is discourse that reveals the absolute difference between the thematic Other and the Other as my interlocutor, who eludes and contests the thematic frame by which I attempt to grasp her. It is this constant overflowing of expression in face-to-face discourse that bespeaks the infinity, or irreducible exteriority, of the Other, which thereby summons my ongoing participation—my continued response and responsibility.

⁸⁰ For Levinas, the incapacity to comprehend the Other (totalize the Other) reflects the Infinity of the Other, rather than the finitude of my own powers. Here, Levinas explicitly opposes the Infinity of the Other in his account with the finitude of Dasein in Heidegger’s account.

⁸¹ Levinas assertion of the impossibility of comprehending the face resonates with Sartre’s claim that “the human face cannot be taken apart” (EIP 159).

Levinas begins with sensibility as the primordial relation with exteriority. Such an account is beneficial in that it radically decentres the subject either as independent from or as founding alterity. However, Levinas's account moves quickly away from this emphasis on sensibility to an emphasis on the idea of infinity and the centrality of dialogue. In this shift, Levinas retreats into an onto-theological and anthropocentric account of alterity.

Like Buber's notion of the absolute "Centre," which authenticates human community, Levinas's monotheism reinserts an absolute and totalizing perspective reconciling the relation between same and Other. As in Buber, the particularity of the individual is superseded by the infinity of the absolute, which means that the moral worth of the Other remains mediated by the Universal (God):

Human fraternity has then two aspects: it involves individualities whose logical status is not reducible to the status of ultimate differences in a genus, for their singularity consists in each referring to itself [...] On the other hand, it involves the commonness of a father, as though the commonness of race would not bring together enough. Society must be a fraternal community to be commensurate with the straightforwardness, the primary proximity, in which the face presents itself to my welcome. Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the Other in the face, in a dimension of height, in responsibility for oneself and for the Other (TI 214/236).

For Levinas, the relationship between the human community and God is the paradigmatic relationship between the same and the Other. In this sense, Levinas reiterates a classical Judeo-Christian conception of ethics in which love (*agapé*) for God gains expression through charity (*caritas*) towards Others. For example, Aquinas writes:

Now the aspect under which our neighbor is to be loved, is God, since what we ought to love in our neighbor is that he may be in God [...] we love all our neighbors with the same love of charity, in so far as they are referred to one good common to them all, which is god.⁸²

⁸² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Vol. III. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1948, Pt. II-II, Q25, Art. 1, 1281.

Even at the level of discourse, the overflowing of expression between the same and the Other is a relative discourse enveloped by an absolute discourse: the word of God. The omniscience and omnipotence of the Divine contravenes the absolute irreducibility and absolute passivity of the Other. Ultimately, the Divine is the only absolute Other within the framework that Levinas presents.⁸³ Thus, while he rejects any similarity (*qua* genus) that serves as the ground of the distinction between the same and the Other (*qua* species), Levinas preserves the “commonness of a father” in virtue of which all Others are the same.

Bound up with his theological and metaphysical presuppositions, Levinas essentializes the human *qua* “face,” and thereby fails to acknowledge the background beliefs and material conditions shaping “faciality.” In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari discuss the “abstract machine” of faciality.⁸⁴ In the chapter “Year Zero: Faciality,” Deleuze and Guattari present the “face” as the intersection of semiotic systems, which they refer to as “white wall/black hole system” (ATP 167). Like Levinas, Deleuze and Guattari connect the face to two basic orders of meaning: *interiority* (black hole) and *signifiante* (white wall).⁸⁵ The white wall of the face is the interpretive frame for the signifier, while the black hole is the opening through which subjectification

⁸³ Levinas argues that the metaphysical (God) is “enacted in ethical relations” (TI 79/77). By this, Levinas argues that access to the Divine is accessible only in Justice, which is to say our ethical relations with the Other. Levinas holds that the primacy of ethics prevents the dissolution of responsibility in the face of a Divine drama (God’s plan). In other words, the primacy of the ethical abandons the metaphysical-theological question of free will and discovers freedom in responsibility for the Other. However, despite such qualifications, Levinas’s ethics is no less dependent on monotheistic assumptions that cannot help but undermine his efforts to avoid a logic of totalization.

⁸⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Vol. 2 of Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987; hereafter indicated as “ATP.”

⁸⁵ I have used “signifiante” here in order to remain consistent with the English translation of *A Thousand Plateaus*. The use of signifiante is intended to highlight the signifying capacity (or power) belonging to the human organism, rather than signification as an objective system of signs. It is important to note that the notions of “subjectification” and “signification” already reflect normative impositions belonging to the conceptual over-coding (territorialization) enacted by the abstract machine of faciality.

enters into the world as interiority, consciousness, or passion: "The face, at least the concrete face, vaguely begins to take shape on the white wall. It vaguely begins to appear in the black hole" (ATP 168). According to Deleuze and Guattari, faces are not metaphysical essences bearing a pure meaning distinct from socio-historical context, rather they are "engendered by an *abstract machine of faciality*, which produces them at the same time as it gives the signifier its white wall and subjectivity its black hole" (ATP 168).⁸⁶

Thus, Deleuze and Guattari are critical of Sartre and Lacan's attempts to locate a primordial subjectivity in the face:

Nor can there be any appeal to a preexisting subject, or one brought into existence, except by this machine specific to faciality. In the literature of the face, Sartre's text on the look and Lacan's on the mirror make the error of appealing to a form of subjectivity or humanity reflected in a phenomenological field or split in a structural field. *The gaze is but secondary in relation to the gazeless eyes, to the black hole of faciality. The mirror is but secondary in relation to the white wall of faciality* (ATP 171).

Although Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly confront Levinas in *A Thousand Plateaus*, their critique of Sartre and Lacan would presumably extend to Levinas's account of the face. If, however, Levinas simply maintained a naturalized conception of the human, then the Deleuze-Guattari critique could gain no substantive purchase on his account. In other words, the fact that the face is "engendered by the abstract machine of faciality" would simply be beside the point. The fact would remain that the "phenomenological" significance of the face, as constructed, could serve as a basis for bootstrapping an ethics on an *anti-essentialist* basis. Thus, on one hand, it could be possible to bracket the essentialism stemming from Levinas's theological commitments and simply accept his account as compatible with Deleuze and Guattari's critique. However, on the other hand,

⁸⁶ Besides Deleuze and Guattari, one could also turn to Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* for a historical-philosophical account of the development of interiority (black hole system). Although the details and the emphasis may differ between Deleuze-Guattari and Taylor, the basic point is the same: subjectivity is not a simple given.

such a bracketing would entail recognizing the ultimate arbitrariness of Levinas's anthropocentrism, which depends on humanity's privileged relation to the Creator: human being as *imago dei*. If we suspend monotheism, then we suspend the justification for excluding, at least on principle, the non-human from moral consideration.

Indeed, part of Deleuze and Guattari's concern with faciality is that it is a politics, which enforces norms of organization and expectation. Specifically in relation to faciality, Deleuze and Guattari echo concerns about the logic of identity underlying ascriptions of deviance addressed in §1.5.2.1 of the present study (Saming vs. Othering): "European racism as the white man's claim has never operated by exclusion, or by the designation of some as Other: it is instead in primitive societies that the stranger is grasped as an 'other.' Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation the White-Man face" (ATP 178). Thus, by ignoring the "face" qua concept, Levinas ignores important ethico-political questions: Who or what gets to have a face?⁸⁷ Who or what governs the attribution of faces? Who occupies the most original face?⁸⁸

3.11 Summary:

To my mind, this ontogenetic narrative reveals a threefold relation between the increasing complexity of the horizon on which the Other reveals herself, which contributes to the concreteness (density) with which the Other appears, and the corresponding ethical insistence (intensity) with which the Other presses. While one might contend that this relation is unsurprising because the increase in density and intensity simply reflects the

⁸⁷ The sad fact of the matter is that the *property* belonging to the rich, the white, and the male is oftentimes treated as an extension of the "face," while women, the poor, and people of colour are often treated as "faceless."

⁸⁸ Even Levinas's monotheism cannot adequately pick out who possesses a face, because the discourses surrounding monotheism include competing claims regarding the "chosen" people, who then assert the privilege of possessing the most original and/or most sacred face.

horizontal transformations belonging to the various phenomenological approaches, the situation is more complex. First of all, the horizontal transformations reflect the incapacity of previous phenomenological theory to accommodate the Other. In other words, such developments in phenomenological method are already *responses* to the Other, which have in turn disclosed the Other in ways that necessitate further theoretical accommodations. Here, it is worth recalling that later modes of phenomenology have been, for the most part, “regressive,” that is, moving *from* subject matter *to* method.⁸⁹ It is precisely phenomenology’s resolute devotion to the “things themselves” that blocks any naïve claim that changes in theoretical commitments simply *construct* the subject matter—constitution is *not* construction. Rather, shifts in theory do not constitute new objects, but new possibilities of disclosure. Such horizontal transformations yield a more robust openness, which is to say more robust background against which the Other can disclose herself in novel and heretofore unavailable ways. In other words, these horizontal constitutions do not add to the Other, rather they add to our capacities for encountering the Other.

To be more precise, the shift from the epistemological to the ethical corresponds to a shift from new possibilities for exposing the Other (curiosity) to new opportunities for the Other to encroach upon us (obligation). Thus, while the epistemological orientation towards the Other as *adequation*—phenomenology is first and foremost an epistemological enterprise—is constitutionally allergic to alterity, the will to truth actually contributes to the ethical orientation towards the Other as *responsibility* because the truth of the Other stretches beyond the bounds of adequation. Having said this, however, it will still be

⁸⁹ See §1.3.2 “Phenomenology” in Chapter One for a discussion of the distinction between *progressive* and *regressive* approaches.

necessary to clarify the specific conditions under which epistemology *supports* the ethical and the conditions by which it *suppresses* the ethical.⁹⁰

Secondly, this relation between phenomenological developments and moral disclosure speak to the fact that the activity of knowing is never neutral. Rather, the investitures entering into the process of coming-to-understand possess serious ethical implications. The realization that our knowledge practices are not ethically neutral does not mean that epistemology grounds ethics, but that epistemology is already subject to an ethical disciplining, which extends beyond those that have been traditionally recognized, e.g., ethics of experimentation. The implication is quite radical, because it entails that the very categories of theorization already effect the disclosure of Others as candidates for moral consideration. Consequently, epistemic responsibility is inextricable from ethical responsibility.

Thirdly, these supplements to phenomenological method are *not* simply transferred into the revelation of the Other. The escalating concreteness of phenomenological horizons in terms of world, embodiment, or gender, for example, does not mean that the Other gains only these attributes, rather these new folds in the complexity of the phenomenological horizon deepen the fold of the Other. It is not a simple accumulation of attributes (Other qua Same), but a mounting density and intensity in the alterity of the Other (Other qua Other). Simply put, the Other qua "face" within Levinas's framework insists on a more robust alterity than does the Other qua "x" in Kant's system.

⁹⁰ I will return to address this question in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

Emptiness (*kû* 空), Nothingness (*mu* 無), and Other-Power (*tariki* 他力)

Unlike the previous chapter, this chapter's genealogy cannot be structured in view of explicit engagements with the question of the Other, because, quite simply, this phenomenological problematic does not exist in the thematized form that it does in the continental tradition. Thus, to treat the "question of the Other" as a portable problem, abstracted from the concrete context of its emergence, is to *im-pose* that question on a text or tradition. To repeat an earlier passage from Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, "Such a 'problem' has fallen out of the motivated context of questioning, from which it receives the clarity of its sense" (TM 376). On the other hand, while this particular problematic does not as such occupy the centre of Japanese Buddhist concerns, this does not mean that what does occupy a central place in that discourse cannot contribute to *our posing* of the question of the Other.¹ And what I take to be a constant theme of these thinkers can help correct our theoretical and practical approaches towards alterity: a radical de-centering of the logic of identity.

More precisely, their efforts aim at externalizing identity, by which I mean that they locate identity in the relations between entities, that is, according to a thing's relative situation within the complex web of interdependence (i.e., in terms of a thing's *dharma*-position; *hôi* 法位). To be sure, the notion of identity is not wholly abandoned. Rather, the absolutized conception of identity understood in terms of intrinsic essence or substance is

¹ Recall Deutsch's comment from §1.3.3 "Comparative Methodology and Philosophical Hermeneutics," wherein he suggests that "one of the significant creative functions of comparative philosophy is to examine how one's formulation of problems can themselves be reformulated in the light of alternative possibilities" from Eliot Deutsch, "Speculations on the Past/Assessments of the Future." Past-Presidents Panel for the Opening Plenary Session 25th Anniversary Conference of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, 1993, 7.

literally *re-placed* by a relativized conception conceived in terms of “place” (e.g., Nishida’s “field” [*basho* 場所] or Nishitani’s “standpoint” [*tachiba* 立場]). For this group of Japanese thinkers, relative identity and relative difference co-mediate nothingness (*mu* 無) or emptiness (*kū* 空), which is nothing more than the spatially and temporally mediated relationship of identity and difference. Nothingness and emptiness are merely tropes for speaking about the relativity of relations, and therefore do not constitute a “view” on the world. Indeed, rather than asserting a theoretical standpoint as such, these tropes redirect us towards directly encountering the immediate relations of our concrete experience. Thus, while the adjective “absolute” (*zettai* 絶対, literally “severing opposition”) often modifies nothingness or emptiness, this notion of “absolute” is not something above or beyond the concrete interactions of the relative. To my mind, then, references to “absolute nothingness” or “absolute emptiness” work to indefeasibly defer any resolution towards an internal conception of identity.²

Correlative to this externalization of identity, these thinkers presume, or explicitly argue for, a radically externalized philosophy of mind, by which I mean that both *content* and *vehicle* are external, i.e., not conceived solely in terms of internal mental states.³ This

² The character *mu* 無 means to “to not possess, to not have, to be without,” while the character *kū* 空 means “sky, air, voidness, vacancy, openness,” both of which suggest the absence of intrinsic properties or intrinsic identity.

³ For the sake of clarity, let me stress that my use of “mind” is broadly construed and *does not* point to something opposing the body. To the contrary, this externalist conception of mind is predicated on (1) embodiment and (2) embeddedness. By way of a second caveat, let me note that such an externalist model of mind does not entail that *all* aspects of mind are external, because it is quite likely that there are some internal representations in the brain (e.g., neural correlates) that bear content. It is also quite likely that the real capacity of these internal states to be content-rich and content-determinate depends on well-developed interfacing with an environment. In other words, content is less about representation and more about availability. In any case, mind is certainly not a

means that not only is intentional content external, but, even more radically, intentional directedness depends on the intelligible availability of the world. In other words, the capacity to be directed towards the world is a structure of worldness, or what Heidegger characterizes as “being-in-the-world.” In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, he writes:

The usual conception of intentionality...misconstrues the structure of the self-directedness-toward, the intention. This misinterpretation lies in an *erroneous subjectivizing* of intentionality. An ego or subject is supposed, to whose so-called sphere intentional experiences are then supposed to belong...the idea of a subject which has intentional experience merely inside its own sphere and is...encapsulated within itself is an absurdity which misconstrues the basic ontological structure of the being that we ourselves are.⁴

In this passage, Heidegger is directly criticizing the mentalist assumptions of intentionality as conceived by Brentano and Husserl, who understand intentionality as internal to consciousness. For Heidegger, however, intentionality is not a feature of consciousness, but an ontological structure belonging to our primordial thrownness into a world that is already available to us (i.e., Heidegger’s *Zuhandenheit*). The primordial form of intentionality is, at bottom, nothing other than one’s most primitive orientation(s) within a pre-objective intelligibility.

From a less Heideggerean perspective, but in a comparable reaction against Cartesian assumptions about mind, Varela, Thompson and Rosch argue in their book *The Embodied Mind*, for what they call an “enactive” approach: “Our intention is to bypass entirely this logical geography of inner versus outer by studying cognition not as recovery or projection but as embodied action” (*EM* 172). For Varela et al., the “enactive” theory of mind provides a way of thinking about the mind (1) as embodied and environmentally situated,

process in the brain, but a skillful-coping relation (i.e., intelligence) between a creature and its environment.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Revised Edition. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, 63-4.

(2) as constituted in the integral coupling and mutually determining relationship between creatures and environments, and (3) as comprising cognitive states that are aspects of sensori-motor activity and perception, rather than internal representational schemas. The Japanese thinkers presented here conceive of mind in terms approaching “being-in-the-world” and/or “enaction,” that is, as an emptying of mind (self) into the world, rather than an assertion of mind (self) against the world.

This twofold externalization, the ontological externalization of identity and the corresponding phenomenological externalization of mind, provides a powerful counterweight to the presuppositions reinforcing the “problem” of the Other in the phenomenological tradition. On my view, the presupposition of intrinsic identity is the source of the *agonistic* stance towards an alterity that encroaches upon and threatens the integrity of “this identity,” while the internalist interpretation of intentionality generates the skeptical problem of authentic *contact* (epistemic, affective, practical, etc.) with the Other.

At this point, I would like to introduce a systematic, but soft, distinction between “emptiness” and “nothingness,” while fully recognizing that the tradition has for the most part taken these two notions to be interchangeable. By “soft” distinction, I mean that these two notions will be pried apart for the sake of clarity without endorsing the wholesale separation of the two. For the most part, this distinction contributes a degree of explicatory simplicity, while also helping to sort out certain explanatory emphases within the Buddhist tradition itself. The first line of emphasis concerns the ontological position that rejects the reality of substance, which I will associate with the concept of “emptiness,” while the second concerns the phenomenological position that rejects the experience of a self,

which I will associate with the concept of “nothingness.”⁵ To put it somewhat differently, emptiness speaks to the externalized conception of identity, while nothingness refers to the externalized conception of mind.

As something of an introduction, let me briefly anticipate the foci of the various analyses comprising this Chapter. In the analysis of Kūkai’s thought (744-835), the thrust of the discussion will try to explicate the paradoxical relationship between the Dharmakāya Buddha and the self (*qua* “intimacy” and *qua* “being intimates”) as a strategy for resisting the categories of identity or difference.⁶ Dōgen (1200-1253) points to the authentic realization of self as constituted by the world (i.e., “myriad things”)—a realization developed in the practice of “earnestly sitting” (*shikantaza* 只管打座) as a

⁵ The Pali and Sanskrit-based Buddhist discourse leans more heavily on the soteriological function of metaphysical disputation, and therefore placed the main accent on “emptiness” (i.e., Nāgārjuna’s “*sūnya*”), which is evidenced by the ascendancy of the *Mādhyamaka* School. In contrast, the Sino-Japanese Buddhist tradition focused on the soteriological function of meditative experience, and therefore placed the main accent on “nothingness,” which is evidenced by the ascendancy of the Chan or Zen Schools. To be sure, however, the Indian Buddhists relied on *vipasyanā* meditation to confirm their metaphysical viewpoint, while Chan Buddhism emerged against the highly-developed metaphysical views of *Tiantai* and *Huayan*.

⁶ On my view, the conventional deconstructive move (and by this I do not mean to include Derrida, but many Derrideans) of focusing on “difference” over “identity” does nothing to ameliorate our appreciation of alterity, since identity and difference amount to the same thing, that is, if they are conceived of intrinsically: either our differing is an onto-logical consequence of our unique and individual identities or our unique and individual identities are an onto-logical consequence of our differing. In either case, identity and difference imply a fundamental separation—often framed in terms of a logic of purity—that is the ontological, existential, psychological, and political basis for hostility towards alterity. On the other hand, if self-identity and mutual difference is sublated at a higher order of identity, i.e., in terms of a common genus, then this higher identity not only totalizes based on a single relevant property or a relevant set of properties, and thereby remains indifferent to what it takes to be irrelevant, but it also performs this totalization in opposition to another identity. For example, fascism not only totalizes a *polis* without regard for relevant differences (internal, external or otherwise), but it performs this totalization *qua* “nationalism” in hostile opposition to other nations (identities). Indeed, the fact that nationalism is almost always accompanied by an *intrinsic* physical or metaphysical basis for identification as an authentic member of the nation, e.g., religious, ethnic, racial, genetic, or blood purity, speaks to the correlation between hostility, the logic of purity, and the internalist conception of identity. The propaganda of fascism always “unearths” a metaphysical basis for unity (internalized identity), while the work of radical democracy lies in the production of solidarity (externalized identity).

paradoxical conjunction of “total exertion” (*gūjin 究尽*) and, what I shall call, radical passivity. In moving from the classical accounts of Kūkai and Dōgen to the contemporary figures of Nishida, Tanabe, Watsuji, and Nishitani, the critique of intrinsic identity and the externalist model of mind becomes even more explicit. With Nishida, “absolute contradictory self-identity” (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu 絶対矛盾的自己同一*) and the notion of “active-intuition” (*kōiteki chokkan 行為的直観*) go hand-in-hand, while Tanabe’s “metanoetics” (*zangedō 懺悔道*) aims at a “naturalness” (*jinen 自然*) of “action without an actor” (*musa no sa 無作の作*) compassionately mediated by alterity or “Other-power” (*tariki 他力*). In Watsuji, we see a powerful critique of methodological individualism as a metaphysical-theoretical position and of individual intentionality as a phenomenological-existential position. In their place, Watsuji argues for a negative conception of “human existence” (*ningen sonzai 人間存在*) as neither individual nor social and for a correlative reinterpretation of intentionality as “betweenness” (*aidagara 間柄*). According to Nishitani, the logic of identity belonging to the “standpoint of reason” (*risei no tachiba 理性の立場*) must give way to the logic of interpenetration in the “standpoint of *sūnyatā*” (*kū no tachiba 空の立場*). Nishitani also articulates a conception of authentic intentionality as not only “Other-directedness” (*kōtasei 向他性*), but also as “Other-centeredness” (*tasha chūshinsei 他者中心性*).

4.1 Kûkai: Intimacy (*mitsu* 密)

*When the medicines of Exoteric Buddhism have cleared away the dust, Shingon opens the Treasury. Then the secret treasures are at once manifested and one realizes all values.*⁷

Admittedly, it is not immediately obvious that sifting through the thought of an 8th century *Shingon* monk could yield worthwhile conceptual resources for grappling with the contemporary Western problematic of how to adequately theorize our relation to alterity. In a comparatively short discussion, the second problem concerns adequately handling a system of thought as religiously profound and comprehensive as Kûkai's, a.k.a. the "Great Teacher of Buddhist Teachings" (*Kôbô Daishi* 弘法大師). Consequently, it is necessary to hone in on a couple of key points of entry, which significantly intersect with the question of the Other. To begin, I will concentrate on Kûkai's presentation of "esoteric teachings" (*mikkyô* 密教) as differing from "exoteric teachings" (*kenkyô* 顯教). This examination will then allow for a more specific analysis into the role of "intimacy" (*mitsu* 密)⁸ as it relates to alterity, which, within Kûkai's iconography, is literally "embodied" by the figure of Dharmakâya-Buddha (*hôsshin butsu* 法身佛)⁹—the ultimate field of Otherness with whom we seek solidarity.

⁷ Kûkai. *Kûkai: Major Works*. Ed. and Trans. Yoshito Hakeda. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, 164; hereafter indicated as "KMW."

⁸ Here, I follow T. P. Kasulis in translating "*mitsu* 密" as "intimacy" rather than "mystery," because it better renders the sense in which *Shingon* teachings are esoteric. In other words, the teachings are not intentionally mysterious or secretive, but require an altered standpoint, namely, a more intimate relationship, vis-à-vis the Dharmakâya. For example, in relation to the "Three Mysteries/Intimacies," Kasulis explains, "They are *mysteries* insofar as they can be intimately, directly experienced but not expressed in language," T. P. Kasulis, "Reference and Symbol in Plato's *Cratylus* and Kûkai's *Shôjijissôgi*." *Philosophy East and West*, 32.4 (1982): 401.

⁹ The doctrine of the "Three Bodies of the Buddha" (Trikâya 三身): *Nirmanakâya* (化身), the personal-historical body of the Buddha as represented by Shâkyamuni Gautama Buddha; *Sambhogakâya* (報身), the enjoyment body of reward and bliss as represented by Amitâbha; and the

In distinguishing esoteric from exoteric teachings,¹⁰ Kūkai repeatedly returns to a rather enigmatic reference to the Dharmakāya's "innermost spiritual experience," which it "preaches for his own enjoyment":

The teachings expounded by the Nirmanakāya Buddha in order to help others, responding to the needs of the time, are called Exoteric. What was expounded by the Dharmakāya Buddha for his own enjoyment, on his innermost spiritual experience, is called Esoteric (KMW 154).

This doctrine of *hosshin seppō* (法身說法)—the "Dharmakāya's expounding of the *dharma*"—forms the centerpiece of Kūkai's efforts to distinguish esoteric teachings from exoteric teachings. The notion of reality itself revealing its own "innermost spiritual experience" offers a profound religious interpretation of the very fabric of experience. Is it possible, however, to generate a more determinate sense of what it means for the Dharmakāya to expound "innermost spiritual experience?"

In trying to get a grip on this religious vision, it is worth beginning with Kūkai's characterization of the Dharmakāya as the ontological "source" or "ground" of all things. Under this description, the Dharmakāya recalls the notion of "dependent co-origination"

Dharmakāya (法身), the transpersonal body of the Buddha as represented by the twofold sense of *dharma*: 1) Buddhist teachings of dependent co-origination and emptiness, and 2) the phenomenal reality of the unfolding world (Suchness). Moreover, with development of esoteric Buddhism in China, the Dharmakāya comes to be identified with *Mahāvairocana Tathāgata* (J. *Dainichi Nyōrai* 大日如来), the Great Sun God, which, in Japan, is then further equated with the Great Sun Goddess of *Shintō*, *Amaterasu*.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that Kūkai's efforts at distinguishing between exoteric and esoteric teachings should not be interpreted as merely sectarian bias, but as justified in terms of a real philosophical difference, which I hope to make evident in this section, between the perspectives of the two kinds of teachings. Moreover, this passage from *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury* (*Hizōhōyaku*), Kūkai explicitly argues that *compassion* can be the only true criterion for claiming that one doctrine is more profound than another: "The ways of thinking of bodhisattvas all stem from their compassion and are preceded by the motivation to benefit others. In this frame of mind, they try to remove people's attachment to superficial doctrines and to guide them toward profounder ones. This practice is exceedingly beneficial. If, however, a man tries to denounce the profound doctrines with the intention of acquiring personal gain and clings to superficial doctrines, then he cannot escape from the sin of slandering the doctrines" (KMW 188).

(*engi* 緣起) as the fundamental ontological assumption informing Buddhist thinking. In other words, the Dharmakâya is the physical world. Secondly, Kûkai explicitly equates the Dharmakâya with the empty void (*kû* 空), thereby invoking the Buddhist notion of emptiness, which in East Asian Buddhism is simply a consequence of dependent co-origination, namely, all *dharma*s are empty precisely because they are dependently arisen. Thirdly, within the *Huayan* metaphysics that forms the metaphysical background of Kûkai's thought, the Dharmakâya is identified with the character *ri* 理, meaning "determinate pattern" and, by extension, "principle."¹¹ Furthermore, *ri* 理 was often used in Chinese Buddhist texts to translate the Sanskrit term, *hetu* ("cause"), which reveals its connection to thinking about causation and causal patterning.¹² When taken together, these various strains of association suggest that Dainichi Nyôrai *qua* Dharmakâya Buddha offers a personal-*qua*-impersonal way of speaking about reality understood as the causal unfolding of dependently arisen phenomena (*dharma*):¹³ "Mahâvairocana Tathagata, for his own enjoyment, exhibiting supernatural power, transforms himself into immeasurable

¹¹ Oftentimes, translator's have rendered *ri* 理 as "noumena," which then opposes "phenomena" (*ji* 事), but such a characterization of the *ri* places it within an inappropriate metaphysical framework suggesting a two-world view that is simply anathema to Buddhism. Similarly, the language of principle has too often been used in the strong sense of "universal principle" resembling the scientific conception of "law," which again runs roughshod over Buddhism's rigorously empirical commitments. Principle, then, should be read in a weaker epistemological-ontological sense (dare I say pragmatic sense), namely, as a shorthand way of denoting recurring patterns in experience.

¹² See the entry for *li* 理 in William Edward Soothill & Lewis Hodous, eds. *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. Taiwan: Buddhist Culture Service, 1937, 359; hereafter indicated as "DCBT."

¹³ For an intriguing discussion of the personal and impersonal as it relates to Buddhist and Christian religiosity, see Chapter Two of Nishitani Keiji's *Religion and Nothingness*, 46-76.

existences and creates limitless exquisite lands" (KMW 258). As Minoru Kiyota writes, "the *Dharmakâya* is the Shingon version of Buddha-nature."¹⁴

The claim that the "Dharmakâya expounds the *dharma*" means that the reality presents itself as it is with transparent sincerity, which resists the anti-empiricist notion that only certain prophets can gain revelatory access to the truth of reality—hence the coincidence of *dharma* 法 as an ontological (phenomena) and epistemological concept (teaching) and the coincidence of *ri* 理 as an ontological (causation) and epistemological concept (pattern, principle). The "innermost spiritual experience" of the Dharmakâya thus speaks to an intimate awareness of causal unfolding from within, rather than from the distanced standpoint of an observer. Kûkai's claim regarding the relative profundity of esoteric teachings is not one of *degree*, but denotes a basic difference in *kind*.¹⁵ To assume the distanced stance of an observer with respect to the procession of reality also assumes that one occupies a standpoint beyond the flux.¹⁶ In other words, the attitude of observer reinforces the *karmic* habit of assuming one's own permanence. Thus, the language of "innermost" points directly to our own *intimate involvement* in the ongoing causal procession of reality.¹⁷

¹⁴ Minoru Kiyota, *Shingon Buddhism: Theory and Practice*. Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1978, 61.

¹⁵ In the opening line of "The Difference between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism," Kûkai claims that there are "three bodies of the Buddha and two forms of Buddhist doctrine" (KMW 151).

¹⁶ Dôgen's "Intimate Words" (*mistugo* 密語) might help to shed further light on this distinctively Buddhist conception of intimacy: "The *mitsu* in question means intimacy (*shimimitsu* 親密) and the absence of distance. [When you speak of the Buddhas and ancestors] the Buddhas and ancestors embrace everything; [likewise] you embrace everything; I embrace everything. Practice includes all; a generation includes all; and intimacy includes all" quoted from Hee-Jin Kim, *Dôgen Kigen: Mystical Realist*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987, 82; hereafter indicated as "MR."

¹⁷ In one sense, it is possible to understand the esoteric/exoteric distinction in terms of the order of the Buddha's original teachings to his disciples, who first realized the "Dharma Eye," namely, that

For Kûkai, the teachings of the historical Buddha(s) necessarily offer a relative truth, that is, a standpoint on the truth of the Buddhist *dharma*, which therefore remains an *external* and *descriptive* interpretation of reality.¹⁸ Kûkai portrays the Dharmakâya (i.e., the impersonal physical world) *qua* Mahâvarocaina Tathâgata (i.e., the personal face of Dainichi Nyôrai) as expounding “for its own enjoyment” in order to distinguish the impersonal *qua* personal nature of the *dharma* (understood in the double-sense of “teaching” and “phenomenal manifestation”) from the Nirmânakâya’s strictly personalized preaching for the “benefit of others”:

[T]he Buddha who preaches for the benefit of others keeps his innermost spiritual experience hidden and does not reveal it in his instructions. It is hidden even from those bodhisattvas who are nearly equal to the Buddha (KMW 156).

Here, Kûkai is drawing attention to the necessarily individualized nature of the Buddha’s teachings as “skillful means” directed towards a specific audience. “For its own enjoyment,” thereby signifies the lack of any means-ends relationship in the nature of reality’s *dharma*, which is to say that the world unfolds indifferently.

In contrast to the tailored descriptive and/or prescriptive accounts of reality defining exoteric Buddhism, Kûkai contends that esoteric Buddhism is *expressive*¹⁹ of a

all phenomena are dependently arisen and without essentiality, and only later realized “*anâtman*,” namely, that “I” am dependently arisen and without essentiality.

¹⁸ “In exoteric Buddhist teachings, this (the unconditioned truth) is understood as the ultimate principle, the theoretically postulated the Dharmakâya; but, seen from the point of view of the Shingon approach, this is an introduction” (KMW 209).

¹⁹ The language of “expression,” which I am using in contradistinction to descriptive and prescriptive modes of communication, need not entail any transcendental essence that gains expression in moving from potentiality to actuality. For example, contemporary research into emotions and physical response suggest that we do not first have an emotion that is then outwardly expressed through physiological responses (e.g., I feel embarrassed, which gains expression in the reddening of my cheeks and the quickening of my heart rate). On the contrary, the physical expression of the emotion is such a real component of the emotion itself that our identification of certain emotions relies heavily on physiological cues. From a different perspective, we ought to be careful not to commit, what John Dewey calls, *the philosophical fallacy of “conver[ting] eventual functions into antecedent existence”* (EN 27).

fundamentally impersonal *qua* personal reality, which is to say that the richness of the real extends beyond any description specific to a unified (i.e., personal) perspective: "Though they [exoteric Buddhists] are able to *perceive* what is true wisdom, they are unable to *realize* the all-inclusive wisdom of the Tathagata because of their separation from him since the beginningless beginning" (italics mine, *KMW* 222).²⁰ Indeed, by turning to practice (*mandala*, *mudrâ*, and *mantra*) as expression, esoteric Buddhism abandons the problems of adequate theoretical description (which in the above passage is associated with *perception*) and simply aims at *realizing* authentic participation in reality from one's place here-and-now (*dharma*-position).²¹

The "truth" of *Shingon* ("true words" 真言), then, concerns a participatory expression of reality, e.g., the genuine performance of a *mantra*, rather than a correct correspondence to reality. In other words, the truth of a mantra is primarily a *perlocutionary* act revealing one's fundamental solidarity *with* the Dharmakâya, rather than a *locutionary* statement *about* the Dharmakâya. This difference corresponds to a fundamental shift in the intimacy of the relationship realized between oneself and the Dharmakâya: (1) a shift from an estranged relationship of resentment (secular view) towards reality as hostile and threatening in its impermanence (*dukkha*), (2) to a distanced relationship of desire (exoteric view) towards the Dharmakâya as an object of understanding and devotion, and finally (3) to an intimate relation of religious solidarity

²⁰ Even a description that adequately correlates a multiplicity of viewpoints (personalities) cannot capture the richness of reality, because of the inherent deficiencies of representational structures, which cannot be both consistent and complete. More to the point, however, the inherent problem of representation, as "standing in for," concerns the radical comprehensiveness of what is to be stood in for. In other words, the representational system and the description itself must part of what is to be described, which runs into information theoretic problems of compression as well as classical set theoretic problems such as Plato's "Third Man" problem.

²¹ Kôkai explicitly held the view that enlightenment could be achieved instantaneously in this very life, that is, the doctrine of "attaining enlightenment in this very body" (*sokushin jôbutsu* 即身成仏).

(esoteric view) with the “innermost spiritual experience” of the Dharmakâya. Put rather differently, the harshness of reality is transformed from a relative, contentless alterity of pure negation and resistance to an absolute alterity pregnant with positive content (*śūnyatā* as “full emptiness”), which is disclosed by altering my fundamental mode of interaction from independence (contemplation and description) to participation (expression and solidarity).

In *Intimacy or Integrity. Philosophy and Cultural Difference*, Kasulis directs our attention to this radicalization of intimacy realized in Buddhist practice:

In its traditional understanding of the self, Buddhism pushes the intimacy orientation to its furthest logical point. Buddhism entirely denies the existence of the “I” or ego (*âtman*) as an independent entity. The Buddhist understands every aspect of the Buddhist self to be conditioned by processes around him or her.²²

This transfiguration of intimacy is characterized by Kūkai in terms of “face to face” transmission: “It is therefore difficult to explain except face to face” (KMW 218). Ultimately though, it is not a matter of explanation at all; rather, the phrase “face to face” articulates the intimacy of the esoteric experience as dwelling within the Dharmakâya’s “innermost spiritual experience.” To be “face to face” with Dainichi Nyôrai as the face of the Dharmakâya is to overcome the false independence of the Same and confront the alterity of the Dharmakâya.²³ In so doing, the negative secrecy of the Dharmakâya is transformed into a positive intimacy.

²² Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity. Philosophy and Cultural Difference*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002, 62; hereafter indicated as “*lol.*”

²³ Being “face to face” not only expresses intimacy, but, conversely, it works to resist the notion of simple identification. In other words, my identification with the Dharmakâya does *not* mean that the Dharmakâya is reducible to me. Ultimately, the continuing existence of the Dharmakâya transcends my worldly existence. It is in order to avoid a simplistic reading of identification as absolute co-extensiveness that I prefer to use the language of “solidarity.”

Esoteric (密教) Buddhism is fundamentally defined as *mitsu* 密 (“intimacy, secrecy, mystery”): “The term Esoteric is also used in the senses of ‘conceal’ or ‘hidden,’ that is, ‘sentient beings conceal,’ and ‘hidden by the Tathagata’” (KMW 156). To find oneself “face to face” with Dharmakâya Buddha is nothing less than the revelation of the secrets of his “innermost spiritual experience.” In other words, through authentic interaction (*samâdhi*-expression), one “intimates” the joy of the Dharmakâya’s experience. The Shingon approach to *samâdhi* (meditative practice) is primarily focused on three symbolic modes, which deploys our bodies (*shin* 身), voices (*kô* 口), and minds (*i* 意) as expressions of the real: *mudrâs* (“symbolic gestures”), *mantras* (“symbolic speech”) and *mandalâs* (“symbolic images”). Kûkai refers to these three modalities as our three intimacies (*sanmitsu* 三密), which are then correlated to the Three Intimacies of the Dharmakâya:

The Dharmakâya Buddha, for his own enjoyment, with his own retinue, preached the doctrine of the Three Intimacies. This is Esoteric. This doctrine of the Three Intimacies is concerned with the innermost spiritual experience of the Dharmakâya Buddha (KMW 152).

As sentient beings, we can creatively express mental images, bodily gestures and communicative acts that are further manifestations of the Dharmakâya. What begins as imitation develops into a recognition that our three intimacies are nothing other than expressions of his Three Intimacies. In his commentary, Yoshito Hakeda contends that “imitation” is central to Kûkai’s sense of practice: “In a word, the essence of Kûkai’s Esoteric Buddhist meditation is simply ‘imitating.’ This is technically called the practice of entering self into Self so that the Self enters into the self (*nyûga ganyû* 入我我入)” (KMW 98).

As ontological ground, the alterity of the Dharmakâya also forms the ultimate basis of self-knowledge. Consequently, ignorance of the “innermost spiritual experience” of the Dharmakâya coincides with the “concealing” of one’s original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本学): “Since sentient beings conceal their original nature, that is, true enlightenment, they ‘conceal’ themselves through illusions derived from ignorance” (KMW 156). As Heidegger is fond of pointing out, that which lies “nearest” is that which is most deeply concealed. And with deceptive simplicity, Peter Hershock points out in *Liberating Intimacy* that “[t]here is nothing closer to us than our experience.”²⁴ Similarly, Kûkai insists on the absolute nearness of the Dharmakâya’s teachings: “The Buddha is nowhere remote. It is in our mind; it is close to us. Suchness is nowhere external” (KMW 263). Paradoxically, it is due to this radical proximity—we are bathed in the real—that the Dharmakâya’s teachings remain the “most secret” and “most profound.”

In Kûkai’s thought, there exists a complex relationship between sameness (the *karmic, samsaric* self) and alterity (the Dharmakâya). From an exoteric perspective, we remain estranged from the Dharmakâya’s “innermost spiritual experience,” which we then encounter as relative Otherness, namely, as not-I. This *samsaric* standpoint preserves a negative relation to the unfolding of reality (impermanence) as my being impinged upon by the unintelligible and the meaningless. This impinging constitutes our experience of existential suffering (*dukkha*). In contrast, the esoteric perspective is a *nirvanic* standpoint of intimacy in which we are liberated from sameness (*karmic*-habit) and able to enter into the “innermost spiritual experience” as an aspect of the Dharmakâya itself, thus directly sharing and participating in his “preaching for his [and now our] own enjoyment.” The

²⁴ Peter D. Hershock, *Liberating Intimacy. Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Ch’an Buddhism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996, 87; hereafter indicated as “LI.”

relative Otherness of the Dharmakâya as the mere conceptual reflection of the not-I gives way to an absolute alterity in which I concretely discover my dependent relation on what is "I" and yet "more-than-"I": the closed economy of the Same is shattered by the alterity of the creative world. Again, T. P. Kasulis offers a succinct articulation of this relation between openness and intimacy: "We enter into intimate relations by opening ourselves to let the other inside, by putting ourselves into internal relations with others or recognizing internal relations that already exist" (*IoI* 43). It is precisely this issue of "recognizing internal relations that already exist," which comes closest to capturing the problem of enlightenment. Since Kûkai holds that all beings are already enlightenēd, we are already embedded within the Dharmakâya's "innermost spiritual experience." In other words, what we reject as relative alterity (mere not-"I"-ness) is actually more original to ourselves than the husk of *karmic* sameness that we mistake as our self. Buddhist practice works to open us to an intimacy that we have heretofore failed to appreciate: we come to recognize that it was not the Dharmakâya that has been concealed from us, but we that have been concealed from ourselves. Rather than a habitual mode of blindness to reality *qua thin* Otherness, we come face-to-face with reality, and thereby with ourselves, as *robustly* Other, namely, there is more to reality and to ourselves than we had ever imagined. Accompanying this recognition of the absolute alterity of reality (*qua* the Dharmakâya) and ourselves (*qua* "no-self" / *muga* 無我) is a transformation in our moral countenance and the recognized scope of moral considerability:

[the practitioner will] realize the unity of himself and others and be integrated in the Dharmakâya of all the Tathagatas. With the great compassion that pours forth unconditionally, he will benefit limitless sentient beings and thus engage in the great activities of the Buddha (*KMW* 231).

Our intimacy with the Dharmakâya translates into a radical solidarity with existence: “the great Self embraces in itself each and all existences” (KMW 258).

4.2 Dôgen: *Genjôkôan* (現成公案) and Radical Passivity

Dôgen’s “*Genjôkôan*” is arguably the philosophical centerpiece of his *Shôbôgenzô* (“Treasury of the Dharma Eye” 正法眼藏).²⁵ Moreover, this fascicle can contribute significantly to the basic cluster of questions and problems with which this study is concerned.

By turning to the title itself, “*Genjôkôan*” (現成公案), we can begin to see its relevance vis-à-vis our phenomenological approach to the Other. The first two characters mean “revelation, manifestation, presence, actuality,” and “consummation, accomplishment, completion, becoming,” respectively, and thus can be rendered as “consummating revelation” (現成). The second pair denotes “sameness, equality, publicity, commonality, generality” and “proposition, plan, idea, opinion, and individuality,” respectively, and therefore could be rendered as “sameness and difference” (公案). Hence, it is conceivable to translate “*Genjôkôan*” as “consummating revelation of sameness and difference,” which is further warranted by the philosophical themes of the fascicle.²⁶ In addition, however, I am sympathetic with Hee-jin Kim’s reading of *kôan* in terms of its conventional sense as a paradoxical statement or “puzzle” constituting the

²⁵ All translations of “*Genjôkôan*” are my own. These translations are based on Dôgen Kigen. *Dôgen Zenshi Zenshû*. Ed. Suzuki Kakuzen. Tokyo: Shunjûsha, 1988 and *Shôbôgenzô Genjôkôan: An Analytic Study* (source unknown).

²⁶ In the introduction to their translation of “*Genjôkôan*,” Masao Abe and Norman Waddell provide support for this reading: “*Kôan* thus indicates the individuality of things and their absolute equality, the sameness of thing’s differences, the differences of thing’s sameness,” from “*Shôbôgenzô Genjôkôan*.” *The Eastern Buddhist*, Trans. Masao Abe & Norman Waddell. 5.2 (1972): 129.

focal point of meditative practice (MR 76-8).²⁷ Under this interpretation, “consummating revelation” as a direct phenomenological experience constitutes the problematic centre of meditation rather than the conventional understanding of a *kōan* as a paradoxical linguistic utterance. The difficult task of actualizing this “consummating revelation” in its full experiential concreteness would thereby function as Dōgen’s *kōan* to be realized.

Indeed, the very idea of “consummating revelation” is helpful in its systematic ambiguity concerning the object(s) of consummation and revelation. On the one hand, the Buddhist doctrines of “momentariness” (*setsuna shōmetsu* 刹那消滅; Skt. *kṣana*) and “impermanence” (*mujō* 無常; Skt. *anitya*) point to the culmination of each *dharma* in every instant. On the other hand, “Genjōkōan” directly addresses the problem of enlightenment (*satori* 悟り), which would suggest that consummation concerns one’s own practice and realization. This ambiguity of consummation therefore parallels the problem of “original enlightenment,” wherein everything is already the very expression of “Buddha-nature” (*busshō* 佛性) or “emptiness” (*kū* 空). Hence, the authentication (*shō* 證) of one’s Buddha-nature in practice (*shu* 修) is never distinct from the momentary consummation of all things. This is precisely why Dōgen claims that one can be “enlightened within enlightenment” or “deluded within enlightenment,” which is to point to the fact that existence is ceaselessly consummating regardless of our attending to it. Ultimately, then,

²⁷ Moreover, this interpretation is further supported by Dōgen’s approach to the *Lotus Sutra*, wherein he treats the phrase, “this sutra” (*zēkyō* 是經), as referring to concrete reality; see Ch. 17 “The Flower of Dharma Turns the Flower of Dharma” (*Hokketen-hokke* 法華轉法華) and Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross’s discussion in the “Notes on Translation” in volume one of their translation of *Master Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*. Trans. Gudo Nishijima & Chodo Cross. London: Windbell Publications, 1994, xiii.

the consummating revelation does not denote any distinct subject or object separate from the continual “activity” (*gyôji* 行じ), “expression” (*dôtoku* 道得), and “total exertion” (*gûjin* 究尽) of each and every entity in its *dharma*-position. To put it somewhat differently, the consummating revelation is nothing other than “impermanence Buddha-nature” (*mujô busshô* 無常佛性) as the tireless self-manifestation of existence.

This preliminary examination of the fascicle’s title provides a positive hermeneutic framework for turning to the passage in “Genjôkôan” that I find most fascinating:

To carry oneself forward and authenticate the myriad dharmās is to go astray, while authenticating oneself in the advance of myriad dharmas is satori.

(自己をはこびて萬法を修證するを迷とす、萬法すすみて自己を修證するはさとりなり.)

In interpreting this key passage, it is worth examining Yasutani Roshi’s explication from his 1996 commentary, *Flowers Fall*: “it’s self and no self. [...] When the deluded dream of the ego breaks up, you become aware of the fact that all existence is the self. [...] It’s all objective world. There is no self.”²⁸ Yasutani begins quite straightforwardly by glossing the first clause as describing the deluded standpoint of the false belief in a substantial self, while the second clause describes the enlightened realization of no-self. As his commentary continues, however, Yasutani’s interpretation becomes more concrete and more profound. His claim that “all existence is the self” describes a radically externalized conception of identity. His claim that “there is no self” is therefore intended to underscore the fact that there is no intrinsic identity to the self; it is not meant to negate the deflated concept of self *qua* extrinsic identity.

²⁸ Yasutani Hakuun. *Flowers Fall: A Commentary on Zen Master Dôgen’s Genjôkôan*. Trans. Paul Jaffe. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996, 23.

By extending Yasutani's reading in a phenomenological direction, one can read this passage as pointing to a radical conversion of the self from the active constitutional centre of willing and knowing to a radical passivity in which the self is constituted and enacted by the world. My use of "radical passivity" points beyond passivity as the mere negation of activity, which is to say past the dichotomy of activity versus passivity.²⁹ On this view, activity and passivity of the self is predicated on the radical passivity (no-self) of being constituted by alterity (the myriad *dharmas*). This is precisely why a few passages further down, Dôgen writes:

To practice the Buddha Way is to practice the self. To practice the self is to completely lose oneself.³⁰ To completely lose oneself is to be realized by (shô 證) the myriad *dharmas*. To be realized by the myriad *dharmas* is to let drop away (*datsuraku* 脱落) one's body-heart-mind (*shinjin* 身心) as well as the body-heart-mind of Others.

This passage expresses passivity in three distinct moments, namely, the losing of oneself in practice, the fact of being realized by the myriad *dharmas*, and the shedding of body, heart, and mind.³¹ The loss of self, which signifies the bracketing of reflective self-

²⁹ Indeed, I would suggest that this transcending of the dichotomy between activity and passivity parallels the distinction between "thinking" (*shiryô* 思量), "not-thinking" (*fushiryô* 不思議), and "without-thinking" (*hishiryô* 非思量) in Dôgen's "Directions on Zazen" fascicle (*Zazenshin* 坐禪箴). According to Kasulis's reading, "without-thinking" describes a non-positional noetic attitude of openness correlated to non-objectified Suchness (*genjôkôan*), while both "thinking" and "not-thinking" represent positional noetic acts correlated to objectified experience. See Thomas P. Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981, 71-7; hereafter indicated as "ZAZP." Indeed, I suggest that "without-thinking" speaks directly to the radicalized passivity in which I am interested, that is, a passivity existing beyond either the positive or negative assertion of the self. Kasulis likens the Zen notion of "no-mind" (*mushin* 無心) to Heidegger's conception of *Gelassenheit* ("letting be"; "releasement") and cites a passage from Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking* that mirrors my account of radical passivity: "beyond the distinction between activity and passivity" (qtd. in ZAZP 49).

³⁰ Although the more literally interpretation of "*wasureru* 忘れる" is "to forget," the English idiom "to completely lose oneself (in an activity)" fits so naturally in light of Dôgen's point.

³¹ In more Husserlian terms, the activity and passivity of the conscious subject is already predicated upon the pre-reflective affectivity and responsiveness to its embeddedness in the lifeworld. In her

consciousness and the corresponding softening of internally monitored identity, allows for the emergence of a newfound intimacy vis-à-vis the myriad *dharmas*. Moreover, the casting off of body-heart-mind, which signifies the softening of proprioceptive self-identification and the corresponding externalization of bodily, affective, and cognitive awareness, allows for the emergence of a newfound intimacy vis-à-vis Others. This dissolution of the boundaries of the self and the resulting solidarity with Others is what Hershock refers to as “horizonless intimacy” (LI 92).³²

Returning to the previous passage, one finds a similar tripartite relation between passivity, the constitution of self by the world, and authenticity surfaces. To begin with, the notion of “carrying” or “transporting” the self (*jiko o hakobite* 自己をはこびて) in order to authenticate reality (i.e., the myriad *dharmas*) suggests a problematic mode of the self that is (1) burdensome, as it is an object carried, and (2) assertive, as it positions itself as the centre of authentication. Hence, Dōgen characterizes this mode as “going astray.”³³

While, to the contrary, the notion of the self authenticated in reality’s advance (*manpō*

paper, “Imagination and Passivity. Husserl and Kant: A Cross Relationship,” Natalie Depraz outlines three phenomenological senses of passivity: a primal passivity of “self-alterity” (i.e., *hyle*), a secondary passivity of “communal sedimentation” (i.e., lifeworld), and a tertiary passivity of “power” (i.e., “vigilance” à la Levinas?). In describing tertiary passivity, which incorporates both primal and secondary passivity, Depraz writes, “Being passive means being able to be completely open towards the other, to welcome him in full awareness: thus, you keep up with yourself at the very moment when you seem to be totally lost in the other and precisely *because* you are fully lost in the other. All this attests to the pre-eminent power of a non-activity which is, as a matter of fact, a real activity engaged in observing itself at the very moment the act is being performed” in Natalie Depraz & Dan Zahavi, eds. *Alterity and Facticity*. Netherlands: Kluwer Press, 1998, 37. To my mind, this tertiary passivity bears some resemblance to the Buddhist notion of “Other-power” (*tariki*), which makes Depraz’s statement, “Buddha’s “compassion” may also help us to understand the tertiary mode of passivity” (37), all the more intriguing.

³² While I agree with Hershock’s analysis, I want to be clear about a significant terminological divergence in my use of “horizon.” While fully recognizing the correlative phenomenological sense of “perimeter, fringe, and limit,” I place the accent on horizon as “openness,” wherein Hershock focuses on horizon as “boundary.”

³³ The character *mei* 迷, which I render as “to go astray” in order to preserve the sense of movement and activity suffusing this passage, was traditionally used in Buddhist texts to translate the Hindu notion of *Mâyâ* (“delusion”), see *DCBT* 339.

susumite 萬法すすみて) describes the state of *satori*. While he spells *satori*, here, in *hiragana* (i.e., phonetically), Dôgen does utilize the character 悟 in the preceding passages. And, to my mind, the character for *satori* is extremely illuminating, that is, if we take the semantic significance of the radicals comprising the character as providing something of an interpretation of the implicit Sino-Japanese understanding of enlightenment. In short, I contend that the character portrays the heightened transparency of mind (or self) as a consequence of realizing the thoroughgoing constitution of the self by the world, which is to say that the authentic self is a nothingness or openness to the world. The left radical, “heart-mind” (*kokoro* 心) points to the fact that authentic affectivity and sapience is inextricable from the embodied and embedded notion of “self” (*go* 吾), which, in turn, is understood in terms of its “porosity” as five (五) openings (口), i.e., the five senses.³⁴ As enlightenment, then, *satori* marks the consummate mode of comportment in the world, namely, affective intelligence as constituted by the proper embeddedness/openness to the world.

Secondly, it is worth noting that although *hakobite* and *susumite* are also not written as *kanji* in the original text, the respective Chinese characters used to represent the two terms provide insight into the implicit Japanese understanding of their sense. While both terms appear with the left enclosure radical *shinnyû* (as in 道 and 込), which conveys the meaning of “advancing.” *Hakobu* 運ぶ “to carry, transport, progress, or advance” is

³⁴ For more on the etymology of *go* 吾 and its semantic relation to other conceptions of self, see the discussion of the distinction between *wu* 吾 and *wo* 我 in §2.2.2 of this study.

written with the character *gun* 軍 representing the “chariot” and meaning “army, troops, war, etc.,” while *susumite* 進みて “to advance, to proceed, to progress, to move forward” is written with the character *furutori* 隼 meaning “(short-tailed) bird.”³⁵ Although both terms signify the notion of advance, *hakobu* is correlated with delusion, while *susumite* is correlated with enlightenment. The iconography of *hakobu* clearly expresses a strong sense of assertiveness and even aggression in its sense of advance, while *susumite* invokes the flight of a bird, whose flight is always forward (birds cannot fly backwards) and whose advance depends on and takes place in the “sky” *kû* 空, i.e., “emptiness.” In point of fact, towards the latter part of “Genjôkôan,” Dôgen writes that the “sky [*sora* 空] is limitless no matter how far a bird [*tori* 鳥 (long-tailed bird)] may fly.”

This brief semantic and etymological excursion into Dôgen’s language is an attempt to disclose something of the “pre-ontological understandings” informing Dôgen’s thought. Moreover, it further justifies my reading of “authenticating oneself in the advance of the myriad *dharmas*” as a phenomenological description of nothingness, namely, that when properly authenticated the “self” is, quite literally, nothing other than the myriad *dharmas*. In *An Inquiry into the Good*, Nishida writes, “It is not that experience exists because there is an individual (*kojin* 個人), but that an individual exists because there is

³⁵ Even though it is a conventional method in Sinology, such an etymological approach to Dôgen is especially useful, because of his extremely sensitive and self-conscious use (i.e., skillful means” [*upâya*]) of language.

experience.”³⁶ In many respects, I understand Nishida’s clarification of his own concept of “pure experience” (*junsui keiken* 純粹經驗) as a helpful explication of Dôgen. To “authenticate oneself in the advance of the myriad *dharmas*” is to concretely realize that one’s self (individual) is a consequence of the unfolding (advance) of experience (myriad *dharmas*). Phenomenologically speaking, the Buddhists are fond of asking one to locate the seer doing the seeing in order to clarify the fact that the self is a logical posit tacked on to experience. This is precisely why Dôgen reinterprets *kenshō* 見性 as “seeing is one’s true nature,” rather than Hui-neng’s “seeing into one’s true nature.” According to Dôgen, mind is the expression and activity of reality from a particular perspective on the totality of things (*dharma*-position). In his commentary, Kim makes a similar point, but he runs the equation in the other direction: “Things, events, and beings of the universe are the expressions (*setsu* 説) of mind, without exception” (MR 117). In glossing this Zen expression, Nishida argues that this “seeing” does not speak to external perception or internal introspection, but to “an absolute overturning of the self,” which serves as the boundary line separating inner and outer.³⁷

Dôgen’s emphasis on “just sitting” includes two contradictory notions, namely, the “just” or “earnest” portion (*shikan* 只管) signifying the “total exertion of a single thing” (*ippō gūjin* 一方究尽) or “expression” (*dōtoku* 道得). This is not to speak of linguistic

³⁶ Nishida Kitarō. *An Inquiry into the Good*. Trans. Masao Abe & Christopher Ives. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, xxx; hereafter indicated as “IG.” The Japanese edition is Nishida Kitarō. 善の研究. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001.

³⁷ Nishida Kitarō. *Last Writings. Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*. Trans. David A. Dilworth. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987, 91; hereafter indicated as “LW.” The Japanese version 「場所的論理と宗教的世界観」 appears in Nishida, Kitarō. 西田幾多郎全集 Vol. 12. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966.

expression, but of ontological expression.³⁸ This ontological conception further accounts for Dôgen's doctrine of *henkai fuzôzô* (偏界不曾藏)—“nothing in the entire universe has ever been concealed,” which, as in Kûkai, points to the equating of *dharma* as phenomena with *dharma* as Buddhist teaching. For Dôgen, the myriad *dharms* are fully expressing and exerting themselves in the ceaseless activity of impermanence, even if we fail to authenticate this fact because we are too busy “carrying ourselves forward to authenticate the myriad *dharms*.” Hence, in “Insentient Beings, Speak Dharma,” Dôgen writes, “Speaking dharma by means of speaking dharma actualizes the fundamental point [*genjôkôan*] that Buddha ancestors entrust to Buddha ancestors. This speaking dharma is spoken by dharma.”³⁹ On the one hand, then, according to the doctrine of *henkai-fuzôzô* nothing has ever been concealed, while on the other hand, we often obscure the concrete reality of things with the shadow of our looming self, thereby missing the open secret of *genjôkôan*. As Hee-Jin Kim explains:

Mystery [i.e., *mitsu* 密], in Dôgen's view, thus consists not in something which is now hidden or unknown in darkness and which will be revealed or made known sometime in the future, but in that *absolute intimacy, transparency, and vividness of thusness*, for “nothing is concealed throughout the entire universe (*henkai-fuzôzô*) (italics mine, MR 83).

The second thread of *shikantaza*, focusing on the practice of “sitting” in seated meditation (*zazen* 座禪), it speaks to a “non-carrying-forward” or “non-advance” of the self. Dôgen's conception of “just sitting” ultimately gathers together the doctrines of self-power (*jiriki* 自力) qua “just” and Other-power (*tariki* 他力) qua “sitting,” thereby realizing a radical

³⁸ The first character *dô* 道 means “way; path; journey” and also “to say; teachings” while *toku* 得 means “to acquire; to achieve; to earn; to gain.” Hence, *dôtoku* means “to earn or achieve articulation” in more of an ontological than verbal sense.

³⁹ Dôgen. *Enlightenment Unfolds*. Ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi. Boston: Shambhala Press, 1999, 185.

passivity, namely, an active passivity, in which I authenticate myself as the dynamic field of *dharmic*-play. At bottom, there exists activity, but it is not activity originating from the self.

Let me draw this section on Dôgen to a close by returning to Nishida. In his attempt to elucidate his own theory of “active-intuition” (*kôiteki chokkan* 行為的直観), Nishida speaks directly to the section of “Genjôkôan” in question:

My view, to the contrary, is that a true absolute passivity [*zettaiteki judô* 絶対的受働] gives rise to a true absolute dynamism [*zettaiteki nôdô* 絶対的能働]. I also think that there is a “non-discriminating wisdom” in the sense of a dimension of knowing that transcends and yet incorporates the judgments of abstract consciousness and determines their validity in respect of the ultimate form of judgment—what I call active intuition. Active intuition is fundamental even for science. Science itself is grounded in the fact that we see *by becoming things* and hear *by becoming things*. Active intuition refers to that standpoint which Dôgen characterizes as achieving authentication “by the myriad dharmas advancing” (trans. mod., *LW* 102).

In this passage, Nishida not only equates his own standpoint of “active-intuition” with Dôgen’s notion of being authenticated by the advance of the myriad *dharmas*, but he argues for the identity of “true absolute passivity” and “true absolute dynamism.” In the sentence immediately preceding this passage, Nishida is concerned that Shinran’s Other-power doctrine has been inadequately received, “It has *only* been understood as an absolute passivity to Amida” (italics mine, *LW* 102). Thus, his larger point is not that absolute activity overcomes absolute passivity, but that they exist in contradictory identity, i.e., active-intuition. Most concretely, Nishida explains active-intuition and, by extension, Dôgen in terms of the fact that “we see *by becoming things*,” which, for Nishida, is not a metaphorical figure but a literal phenomenological description of mind (we see and hear) as radical externalized (by becoming things).

4.3 Nishida: Nothingness and the Field (*basho* 場所) of the Other

*Buddha and I, distinct through a billion kalpas of time,
Yet not separate for one instant;*

*Facing [對] each other the whole day through,
Yet not facing each other for an instant (LW 82)⁴⁰*

In his last essay, “*Basho-Logic and the Religious Worldview*,” Nishida Kitarô comments on this famous verse by Zen Master Daitô Kokushi (1282 - 1337). He glosses this passage as “the self and the absolute are always related in the paradoxical form of simultaneous presence and absence” (LW 78). But what is meant here by “presence” and “absence”?

According to his logic of *basho* (場所 “field; topos; locus; place”)⁴¹ and absolute contradictory self-identity (*zettai mujunteki jikodôitsu* 絕對矛盾的自己同一), the confrontation between self and Otherness is co-determining and co-creating, but not at the level of mere “sense” or “meaning.” Indeed, what fundamentally sets Nishida’s view apart from a strictly phenomenological approach to the question of the encounter between Same and Other is that Nishida understands “expression” (*hyôgen* 表現) as performative *force* and not merely as informative *meaning*⁴²:

⁴⁰ 億劫相別、而須臾不離、尽日相對、而刹那不對。It is worth noting that the character translated here as “facing” (對) is the same character appearing in the compound for “absolute” (絕對), which literally means “severed or cut-off from opposition.” Hence, Nishida is fond of playing with the paradoxical image of “facing (對) the absolute (絕對).” To put it rather baldly, the character *tai* 對 is clearly one of Nishida’s favourites.

⁴¹ In Buddhist terminology, the character *ba* 場 is associated with “the *bodhi*-plot [道場], or place of enlightenment,” see *DCBT* 369.

⁴² I submit that A. N. Whitehead’s notion of “prehension,” or “concrete facts of relatedness,” provides a helpful standpoint from which Nishida’s conception of “expression” as a *force* can be understood, especially in light of the fact that world-and-self and self-and-other are mutually determining through their respective self-expressions. For Whitehead, negative prehensions (“exclusion”) and positive prehensions (“feeling”) describe the determinate solidarity of the universe in terms of how things (“actual entities”) stand in relation to each other (“relevance”), which, in turn, is constitutive of the determinateness and significance of individual things and the universe.

In the world of historical transformation, expression is a force [*chikara* 力], a formative vector [*keiseiteki hōkō* 形成的方向]. It is not merely something like “meaning” [*jimi* 意味] as the phenomenologists and hermeneuticists are saying. These scholars abstract expression from its vectorial character. Phenomenological meaning is the content of the world conceived of non-transformationally—at the ultimate point of the self-negating direction of the world that is dynamically self-expressive (LW 104).⁴³

Nishida consciously rejects the idealistic tendencies within phenomenology, which he sees as the drive to reduce beings (*Seindes*) and Being (*Sein*) to meaning. By resisting the temptation to equate beings and Being with intelligibility, Nishida resists positing the subject as simply a coordinator of meanings (*cogito*).

The existential deepening of Nishida’s notion of expression beyond mere “meaning” to include “force” (*chikara* 力) has often been overlooked in discussions of his thought.⁴⁴ And yet, this innovation opens up a radical critique of phenomenology and, in

Moreover, Whitehead views prehensions as having a “vector character” involving “emotion and purpose, and valuation, and causation,” and yet *not* dependent on consciousness. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*. Corrected Edition. Eds. David Ray Griffin & Donald W. Sherburne. New York: The Free Press, 1978, 19.

⁴³ In his *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, Nishida equates Husserl’s phenomenology with “subjectivism,” because it focuses on the content of the world only in terms of meaning: “Herein the world of what the phenomenologist calls *Sache* may be conceived, as I have said above. But it is not a world of things; it does not have the significance of negating us. Phenomenology still does not avoid the standpoint of psychology. *Sache* eliminates the *Tat* from the *Tatsache*,” Nishida Kitarō. *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*. Trans. David A. Dilworth. Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1970, 196.

⁴⁴ For example, even in recent scholarship such as Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity. Dōgen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-Self*. Surrey, U.K.: Curzon Press, 2001, and James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001, there remains a tendency to view Nishida as focusing on consciousness *qua* meaning/knowledge. Thus, while Kopf distinguishes between the “abstract world,” the “phenomenal world,” the “lived world,” and the “actual world,” his focus on the phenomenological language of “positionality” and “thetic” acts prevents the full implication of these distinctions to surface. The general tendency of his explication is to retreat into a Husserlian position, which cannot help but reinstate the centrality of the subject as a coordinator of meanings. Similarly, in Heisig’s analysis, the full implications of Nishida’s understanding of expression *qua* force gets somewhat occluded behind a tendency to read him solely in terms of his German Idealist vocabulary. To my mind, the lack of appreciation of this aspect of “expression” reflects a deeper failure to appreciate the Buddhist sensibilities—explicit, tacit, or otherwise—informing Nishida’s thought. Instead, hermeneutic commitments to

particular, reveals the problematic nature of dislodging phenomenological analysis from the concrete world in order to focus solely on the *surface* (presence) of intentional content. Even Husserl's conception of appresentation is simply another strategy for reducing depth and opacity to surface and presence. To take "sense" as central is to construe the self in essentially Cartesian terms, wherein the self remains fundamentally alienated from everything external to the immediacy of intelligibility. By concentrating on the constitution of meaning, phenomenology continues to reinvest in an essentially epistemological, hence Cartesian, interpretation of existence. The encounter with the Other as "sense" is simply a thin and one-dimensional field of encounter, which is a key to the failure of phenomenology to adequately work out the question of the Other as "effecting" me, us, them, and the world.

Instead of privileging the epistemological dimension of subjectivity, Nishida understands the self as causally continuous with the world. It is to his credit that Nishida conceives of the relation between self and Other as occurring within a field (*basho*) that is concrete, historical, and existential, which is to say multidimensional, multileveled, and multivalent: "it is not the case that because our minds exist, the world exists. It is not that we merely see the world *from the self*. The self is rather something seen *from this historical world*" (LW 109). While he does not simply reject the importance of expression *qua* "intelligibility," Nishida insists on a full spectrum of efficacy belonging to the Other as a creative-productive element in the historical world. Indeed, by locating the impact of the Other on the field of the historical world, Nishida escapes the strictly dyadic economy that reduces the Other to its impact on the self. Nishida dramatically recasts the Other by

phenomenological and German Idealist standpoints have simply trumped the fact that the Kyoto School thinkers emerge against a well-developed background of Buddhist philosophy, which has taken "causality" as fundamental.

recognizing that the “presence and absence” of the Other (1) extends beyond “meaning” to include *causal* presence/absence, and (2) extends beyond “meaning for me” (solipsism) to include the world historical impact of the Other. In so doing, he indirectly reveals how constrictive and inadequate the phenomenological standpoint has been for responding to the Other. In other words, phenomenology’s *allergic* reaction to the Other is a symptom of a theoretically *anemic* standpoint.

The above remarks regarding Nishida’s concept of expression are essential for fully appreciating his description of the “interaction” and “inter-expression” of self and Other:

This is the absolutely contradictory identity, the mutual revealing, of self [*jiko* 自己] and other [*hoka* 他]. I understand the other through my own activity [*ugoki* 動き]. My activity originates neither from the outside nor from the inside: self and other are co-originating through mutual inter-expression. Self and other interact in this way. It is neither the self-becoming-other nor the other-becoming-the-self; the other simultaneously creates the self as its own self-expression. The I and Thou relation between persons is just such an inter-expressive relation. This dimension of dynamic self-expression is the dimension of inter-transformation and thus of mutual expression (trans. mod., LW 103).⁴⁵

By claiming that “conscious activity” cannot be simply located as internal or external to the subject, Nishida again challenges the basic assumptions of the modern subject. Basic to modernity’s conception of the subject is the straightforward identity of “consciousness” and “interiority.” Nishida’s notion of “active-intuition” (*kôiteki chokkan* 行為的直観)

⁴⁵ In altering the original translation, I have excised the translator’s use of “conscious” to modify the notion of “activity,” because I fail to see any basis for this language of “consciousness” in the original Japanese. Nishida simply uses variations of the verb, *ugokasu* (動かす), meaning “move, shift, inspire, rouse, influence, deny, inspire, activate, etc.” Indeed, on my reading, Nishida is precisely trying to avoid the narrowness of idealistic language such as “consciousness.” Moreover, it is worth noting in relation to *ugokasu* that in classical Chinese thought, this character, *dong* 動 “movement-agitation,” was tightly coupled with the concept *jing* 静 “tranquility-equilibrium,” which, in turn, was associated with the correlative concept of *ganying* (“arousal-response” 感應). These *dong-jing* and *gan-ying* correlates also cannot help but invoke Nishida’s central concept of “active-intuition” (*kôiteki chokkan* 行為的直観).

represents his explicit attempt to avoid superimposing the “inner-outer” dichotomy on the existential field in which the creative *interchange* between self and world (self and Other) unfolds. Active-intuition speaks directly to the non-duality of expression, as well as the coincidence of activity and passivity in expression. Nishida rejects any description of an event that would reduce the source of activity to consciousness (first-person perspective) or to world (third-person perspective). Rather he views the externality (action) and interiority (intuition) as relative points of view on the same continuum of experience. In so doing, Nishida empties mind out into the world: “An activity that is truly selfless is actively intuitive” (LW 102). Like Merleau-Ponty, Nishida recognizes the ontological “intertwining” of action and intuition (i.e., “reversibility”) and the intertwining of embodied self and world (i.e., “flesh”). Indeed, the notion of intertwining may even be too weak to adequately depict the coupling of activity and intuition, since Nishida views them as simply differing standpoints on expression: perception is an aspect of action, while action is an aspect of perception.

Hence, when he writes, “We are the many faces facing the absolute one in a dialectic of presence and absence” (LW 94), Nishida is positing neither a transcendent nor transcendental unity distinct from the continuum of presence and absence. Instead, the notion of the “absolute one” refers to the widest possible *basho* of expression: absolute nothingness (*zettai mu* 絶対無). This “absolute One” (i.e., dependent co-origination), then, is not something separate from the “many faces facing” (i.e., relative beings), but rather is coextensive with the dynamic flux of presence and absence, the ongoing arising and ceasing of *dharmas*, and the endless transformation of *dharmic* relations. The “many faces facing” are not relative beings because they are relative to some static absolute, but

because they are *in relation to each other*. Hence, the absolute is nothing other than the *changing expression* of the “many faces facing,” which is to say that it represents the full, multi-perspectival expression of the universe in each moment.

Active-intuition also represents a critical alteration in one’s moral comportment. But before turning to understand this shift in ethical orientation, it is necessary to consider a key question raised by Robert Carter in *The Nothingness Beyond God* concerning the ubiquity of active-intuition:

It appears that action-intuition refers both to the oneness of intuition, and to direct and immediate action achieved by the masters of the various contemplative and martial arts of the East, *and* to the ordinary everyday historical acts of common people. Yet how can it be both, or if both, can it be both in the very same sense?⁴⁶

While active-intuition may be exemplified in the master swordsman’s lightning responsiveness to his opponent, because of its conspicuousness as a rarefied activity, active-intuition permeates the banality of our everyday lives—what Nishitani refers to as “eschatological ordinariness.”⁴⁷ The tacit background of our activity unfolds according to active-intuition. For example, the simple act of greeting a guest at the door can be re-described in a way that can make this backdrop of active-intuition explicit: (1) raising and holding ourselves erect in a gravitational field (i.e., standing up from the sofa), (2) moving across terrain changes through a scattered field of objects (i.e., walking from the living room to the foyer), (3) tracking and grasping an object with the correct hand-aperture (i.e., reaching for the doorknob), (4) preparing and activating the proper body schema (i.e., pulling the door open), (5) complex pattern recognition and identification of a newly

⁴⁶ Robert Carter, *The Nothingness Beyond God. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarô*. 2nd Edition. New York: Paragon House, 1997, 125.

⁴⁷ Nishitani Keiji, *Nishida Kitarô*. Trans. Yamamoto Seisaku & James Heisig. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 181.

discovered object (i.e., seeing my friend), and (6) performance of intersubjectively meaningful and appropriate verbal-physical gesticulations (i.e., greeting and shaking hands). Moreover, this re-description can be executed at increasing levels of detail in order to exhume more of the complexity inherent in what is experienced as a fluid, singular, and simple task. Moreover, if we were to describe this performance in terms of its constituent intra-personal systems of order, it is clear that this “basic” action draws on a history of finely attuned and integrated competencies in perceptual expertise, sensori-motor coordination, and socio-linguistic familiarity. It is precisely because active-intuition is firmly rooted in “eschatological ordinariness” that Nishida cites Lin-chi’s (J. Rinzai) endorsement of locating enlightenment in the naturalness of the everyday: “The Buddha-dharma does not have a special place to apply effort; it is only the ordinary and everyday—relieving oneself, donning clothes, eating rice, lying down when tired” (*LW* 90).

Since the concept of active-intuition emerges as a development on Nishida’s earlier thinking about pure experience, it is also possible to locate an answer to the question therein. In his discussion of pure experience, Nishida contends that while we may experience relative orders in which pure experience becomes broken, he is clear that, at bottom, “we cannot leave the sphere of pure experience” (*IG* 9). Similarly, we cannot leave the sphere of active-intuition, which means that while I may be clumsy in the acquisition of a new skill or in habituating to a new domain of experience, my acquisition of a skill-set or my habituation to a domain relies on an already extant background of skills and domain-acquaintance integrating me into my larger environment. In other words, whereas my encounter with rarefied skill-sets and specialized domains may break with active-intuition, I am never completely alienated from the world. Indeed, to be completely

alienated from the world would be to be completely alienated from oneself; and, conversely, to be at home with oneself is to be intimately integrated into a world.

Now to return to the relation between active-intuition and ethical comportment, we can begin to understand what Nishida means by *sincerity*: “Sincerity [*makoto* 誠] is a form of selflessness, a pure response to the other. Perfect sincerity is grounded in infinite compassion” (LW 107). For Nishida, sincerity is not a mere psychological attitude, nor should it be reduced to an anthropocentric concept. Rather, sincerity describes a mode of naturalness and intimacy between agent and domain (alterity), wherein explicit success monitoring by the reflective self is no longer necessary. “Selflessness” with respect to *makoto* describes the absence of management by the reflective self, which in turn allows for a “pure response” vis-à-vis an *enviored* Other—we never confront a bare Other, but always an Other situated within a domain (hence my language of “alterity” to describe this more holistic relation). This is precisely why Nishida argues that the I-Thou relation can only occur within a given *basho*: “The world of expression is neither the world of the mere self nor the world of the mere Thou; it is a public place/field (*basho*).”⁴⁸ This is a point that Hiroshi Kojima views as a crucial supplement to Buber’s dialogical philosophy: “Nishida’s Nothingness provides the field of appearance for this deepened Thou [...] the precondition of the real, actual encounter as the monad complex between I and a possible Thou.”⁴⁹ It is precisely this *emplacement* that provides for the intelligibility of a given response, which is to say that a hockey arena, a social gathering, a party, and a funeral are all domains of encounter that define different intelligibility constraints on the possibilities for responding

⁴⁸ Nishida Kitarô, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*. Trans. David Dilworth. Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1970, 64.

⁴⁹ Kojima Hiroshi, *Monad and Thou. Phenomenological Ontology of Human Being*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000, 215-6.

to Others. Sincerity therefore can be construed as a native intelligence within a domain, which allows for a seamless interface between self and situation, or what Nishida calls a “non-discriminating wisdom.” This wisdom or skillful coping with a situation “means to obey that which transcends us and causes us to be what we are, and to do so in the volitional, or dynamic, form of the contradictory identity of objectivity and subjectivity. [...] Moral behavior is grounded in it” (italics mine, LW 102). Moreover, according to Nishida, this realization of profound intimacy between an agent and its environment can be interpreted cognitively as “knowledge” and affectively as “love”:

Love is the deepest knowledge of things. Analytical, inferential knowledge is superficial knowledge, and it cannot grasp reality. We can reach reality only through love. Love is the culmination of knowledge [...] Subjectivity is self-power [*jiriki*] and objectivity is other-power [*tariki*]. To know and love a thing is to discard self-power and embody the faithful heart that believes in other-power (IG 175).

This intersection between subjectivity and objectivity realized in love, as the culmination of intimate knowledge, constitutes the capacity “to obey that which transcends us,” namely, a following of the contours of Other-power. This giving oneself over to Other-power is not a mystical leap of faith, but simply what Gadamer describes as the “*primacy of play over the consciousness of the player*” (TM 104), or, even better, “all playing is being-played” (TM 106). Since the discussion has turned to the question of Other-power, perhaps it would be timely to turn our attention to the philosophy of Tanabe Hajime.

4.4 Tanabe: Metanoetics (*zange* 懺悔) and Other-power (*tariki* 他力)

Insofar as events are not all mystery and incomprehensibility, some degree of rational mediation can be adopted to make them understandable. Concepts, as determinations of action through the negations and transformations of thought, serve us in assimilating events whose clarification requires the self-consciousness of reason as well as the logical mediation of philosophy. Anything that can simply be reduced to the principle of identity is not a problem for philosophy. For a problem to belong to philosophy there must be something inconceivable in it; and yet by the same token, something altogether inconceivable and mysterious cannot become a problem for philosophy.⁵⁰

This passage from the opening pages of *Philosophy as Metanoetics* lays out a conception of philosophy in terms of a play between the conceivable and the inconceivable. A play that resonates with a conception of alterity as constituting a horizontal spread from the other *qua* Same to the other *qua* Other. This mitigated endorsement of reason, however, includes a simultaneous surrender to the inconceivable. To rephrase this in Tanabe's preferred terminology, the "self-power" (*jiriki* 自力) of reason must ultimately give way to the "action-faith-witness" (*gyô-shin-shô* 行信證) of "Other-power" (*tariki* 他力). This *giving-way-to* represents the conversion of metanoetics (*zange* 懺悔).⁵¹ Thus, the interpretive project with respect to Tanabe's text is twofold. Primarily, it is to understand this mediational process of *zange*, which, secondly, requires an examination of the nature and role of *tariki* within this mediation. Methodologically, this interpretation will unfold

⁵⁰ Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*. Trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori. Berkeley: University of California, 1986, 13; hereafter indicated as "PaM." The Japanese edition is Tanabe Hajime, 懺悔道としての哲學. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1947.

⁵¹ In religious terms, *zange* (or *sange*) means "remorse, repentance, confession, and penitence." It is Tanabe that specifically glosses *zangedô* in terms of the Greek notion of *metanoia* (μετανοια), in order to highlight "the self-awakening which comes to one by way of *zange*" and to denote "transcending the contemplative or speculative philosophy of intellectual intuition as it is usually found in the realms of thought based on reason. [...] It is not a philosophy founded on intuitive reason of *jiriki* (self-power)" (PaM 3).

dialectically, that is, it will begin with a preliminary understanding of *zange* as a basis for explicating *tariki*, and then return to consider *zange* in light of an understanding of *tariki*.

Tanabe defines *metanoetics* (lit. “the way of *zange*”), as “a self-awakening [*jikaku* 自覺] through a ‘way’ of repentance, a ‘thinking-afterward [*atoshi* 後思]’” and as “a self-conscious transcending of intuition and contemplation” (*PaM* 3). Moreover, Tanabe argues that as a “transcending,” *metanoetics* also describes a “‘breaking through’ [*toppa* 突破] (*Durchbruch*) of a self that hitherto had moved exclusively within the realms of discursive thought and reflection” (*PaM* 4). Thus, *zangedô* is a “breaking though” *qua* “thinking afterwards,” that is, a looking back on the self, which initiates a liberation from the self. However, the self from which we are delivered is the self that *belongs to* the standpoint of reason, in the sense of being *karmically* constrained to that standpoint. It is the self that lives on the ground of the logic of identity, rather than the self that is dying in the abyss of transformation: “*zange* means simply following a disciplined way toward one’s own death” (*PaM* 4). Tanabe’s point here is fundamentally Buddhist, namely, his notion of *zange* is a rejection of ontological independence and self-subsistence. Indeed, Tanabe argues that the assertion of our free spontaneity on the basis of ontological independence is the source of human evil, and thus he equates this notion of freedom *qua* independence with Kant’s notion of “radical evil.” (*PaM* 4).⁵² Tanabe also characterizes this evil as human “arrogance,” which he defines as our propensity to:

⁵² In this respect, Tanabe’s position resembles Levinas’s critique of the “spontaneity” as the Same’s constitutional blindness to the dependence on Others for its “I can.”

extend the “analogous” structure of our being [*qua* relative beings] into the extreme assumption of being directly “identical”—namely, to confuse our role of mediatory activity executed on behalf of the absolute with an immediate affirmation of our freedom, oblivious to the fact that our existence can be founded only on a principle of transformation [i.e., dependent co-origination], or conversion (*PaM* 4).

What is crucial to notice in this passage is Tanabe’s equating of transformation with “conversion.” This equation serves as the hermeneutic key for understanding Tanabe’s sense of *zange*. Moreover, this equation blocks a subjectivist interpretation. While conversion conventionally suggests a *religio-psychological attitude* with respect to fundamental belief structures, Tanabe does not view metanoetic conversion as being “belief” directed at all. To the contrary, it is the “breaking through” of a mode of being governed solely by belief-relations to the world, which is to say a transcendence of a mode of living determined by a contemplative standpoint vis-à-vis impermanence. In place of the contemplative or distanced standpoint towards the continual conversion of existence, *zange* describes an awakening to this conversion. This awakening to conversion is, at the same time, an awakening to Other-power:

When we speak of Other-power, the Other is absolute precisely because it is nothingness, that is, nothingness in the sense of absolute transformation. It is because of its genuine passivity and lack of acting selfhood that it is termed absolute Other-power. Other-power is *absolute* Other-power only because it acts through the mediation of the self-power of the relative that confronts it as other. Only to that extent is genuine, absolute Other-power mediated by self-power (*PaM* 18).

Here, Tanabe clearly identifies Other-power in terms of “nothingness” or “absolute transformation.” Other-power, then, is simply the everyday world (*samsara* is *nirvana*)—but the world no longer perceived as an object, understood essentially, or comprised of independently existing entities. It is precisely because of the shedding of such “worldviews” that Tanabe describes Other-power as an “absolute realism” (*PaM* 263).

Since the world is nothing but the endless mutual mediation of relative beings, it is not a mediation regulated by an order that is external or transcendent to the mediation itself. Hence, Tanabe's emphasis on the passivity of this mediation: "absolute Other-power is pure passivity without an agent" (*PaM* 246). To be sure, this "pure passivity" is not inactivity, but a selfless activity. It is precisely because this radical passivity is a consequence of the concrete fact that all beings are without selves (*muga* 無我) that the "death" of the assertive self—"a surrender of the self in self-surrender of pure passivity and complete submission" (*PaM* 243)—constitutes entrance into the solidarity and intimacy of this mediation.⁵³

Moreover, the realization of this intimate solidarity with Other-power also prompts a significant transformation in one's comportment, or what Tanabe refers to as "naturalness" (*jinen* 自然).⁵⁴ In *Individuum, Society, Humankind: The Triadic Logic of Species according to Hajime Tanabe*, Ozaki Makoto explains this relationship between Other-power and naturalness:

It is through the mediation of the act of the person as believer, that Buddha operates. That is, when a person acts, he is, in reality, made to act by Buddha. This state of affairs, implied by the double structure of the act, is a so-called *state of naturalness*, in which the person acts, while at the same time does not act (i.e., action without action), with the entailment that he is entirely absorbed into a real presence (manifestation of absoluteness). He proves himself as being involved in making and producing something in terms of action without action of self as non-self [*italics mine*].⁵⁵

⁵³ This entrance is what Tanabe (via Shinran), calls *ôshô-ekô* (往相回向) or "going to the Pure Land," while the resulting solidarity and intimacy is *gensô-ekô* (還相回向) or "returning from the Pure Land." This double movement of going and return represents the Bodhisattva ideal of realization *qua* engaged compassionate response to the suffering of Others.

⁵⁴ Again, Tanabe borrows this notion from Shinran—"the principle of naturalness" (*jinen no kotowari* 自然の理), which is the *ziran* (自然) discussed above in relation to classical Daoism.

⁵⁵ Ozaki Makoto, *Individuum, Society, Humankind: The Triadic Logic of Species according to Hajime Tanabe*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001, 66-7.

Tanabe explicates this notion of “naturalness” as the death of the self and the transcendence of the self-Other antagonism. This nonduality between self and Other is the full realization of dependent co-origination:

Absolute Other-power means obedience to an absolute seen as a “naturalness” that supersedes the opposition between self and other. Hence, when we say that the self becomes a mediator of Other-power, we cannot mean that it cooperates with the Other-power that confronts it. Properly speaking, we mean that the self is transformed under the influence of an absolute nothingness which is neither the self nor an other, and is drawn into a ‘naturalness’ in which the self loses itself: Other-power is action (*gyō*) seen as the transformation of the self (*PaM* 235).

Tanabe’s focus on “action,” here, is a consequence of his rejection of the contemplative standpoint, which seeks to thematize a relation that can only be realized in action.

According to Tanabe, intimate solidarity with Other-power cannot be made thematic by definition, because the act of thematization is an act of self-power: “this way [the way of Other-power] is naturally more concrete than the way of self-power, which is no more than a philosophical development of the symbolic side of the way of Other-power” (*PaM* 253). On Tanabe’s view, then, the exteriority of identity and mind can only be realized in action, because theoretical reflection necessarily returns us to a standpoint of interiority. Indeed, the philosophical implication is still more radical, because even if at the level of belief one vehemently denied intrinsic identity and the internal conception of mind, the standpoint of “having a belief toward” would constitute *acting as if* interiority were the case. The issue for Tanabe is clearly not one of true or false beliefs, but a question concerning the fundamental source of action.

This naturalness of action *qua* pure passivity returns us to the earlier analysis of Dōgen in which I argued that *genjōkōan* implied a realization of radical passivity. In his essay, “The Problem of Death in Dōgen and Shinran,” Abe Masao draws a similar

connection between the two thinkers: "Shinran also maintains that 'as for *jinen* (naturalness) *ji* means 'of itself'—it is not through the practitioner's calculation.' This view of Shinran is also found in Dôgen, who severely rejects 'practicing and confirming all things by conveying one's self to them.'"⁵⁶ Shinran's interpretation of *ji* 自 as meaning "of itself" is an attempt to block the conventional understanding of *ji* as "self," which would imply a *samsaric* form of naturalness, i.e., a consequence of *karmic* compulsion rather than an expression of Other-power. For Shinran, liberation on the basis of self-power is no longer possible, precisely because the self has become so determined by *karma* that authentic practice and self-discipline is only attainable by those already born as Buddhas. Indeed, the doctrine of Other-power was a response to the accumulation of *karmic* bondage definitive of the age of "degenerate *dharma*" (*mappô* 末法). The Pure Land focus on Other-power is an explicit rejection of faith in the self's power to act on behalf of itself or Others; hence, naturalness cannot be the doing of the self, but a doing that occurs "of itself."

To conclude this discussion of Tanabe by returning to his concept of metanoetics, I would like to draw attention to an interesting point of convergence in this view and the standpoint of the present study. For Tanabe, the conversion of *zange* occurs at the limits of reason's capacity to effectively get a grip on the world. In the very failure of self-power, there exists a turning towards Other-power: "Thus our relative knowledge is forced to a limit at which relative being confronts antinomies that it cannot, because of its relativity, escape and there negates itself, obediently merging with the absolute as its other" (*PaM* 272). In other words, it is at the limits of our encounter with the relative alterity of the

⁵⁶ Abe Masao, *A Study of Dôgen*. Ed. Steven Heine. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992, 164; hereafter indicated as "SD."

Other *qua* epistemology that we confront the absolute alterity of the Other *qua* ethics. There exists a conversion *from* a standpoint on the Other as an object of knowledge *to* a recognition of the Other as a moral considerable, that is, a shift from the Other given in terms of the self to the self given in terms of the Other. In Tanabe's *metanoetics* and my conception of *alteration*, confrontation with the limits of the Same provokes a transformative encounter with the power of the Other.

4.5 Watsuji: Betweenness (*aidagara* 間柄) and Sincerity (*makoto* 誠/信/眞/實)

Watsuji Tetsurô's *Rinrigaku* (倫理学), "A Study of Ethics," addresses the question of ethics from the standpoint of existential phenomenology.⁵⁷ However, Watsuji's critique challenges the centrality of *abstract intentional analyses*, which presume the priority of a contemplative and egocentric mode of existence. In the place of intentionality, Watsuji substitutes concrete analyses of "betweenness" (*aidagara* 間柄), which he conceives as rooted in practical action and sociality. On Watsuji's view, ethics concerns the normativity of relationships *between* individuals, and therefore it cannot be adequately theorized from the standpoint of methodological individualism, which assumes discrete individuals as the ultimate metaphysical entities of description. For Watsuji, ethics derived from such a standpoint can only pose questions in terms of the individual, and therefore can only entertain problems such as "the independence of the self over nature, or the sway of the self over the self itself, or the satisfaction of the desires of the self" (R 10). Regardless of the ultimate adequacy of the responses, methodological individualism can only ask after

⁵⁷ Watsuji Tetsurô, *Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*. Trans. Yamamoto Seisaku & Robert E. Carter. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996; hereafter indicated as "R."

a small subset of the issues constituting the lived reality of our moral lives. As a result, Watsuji contends that such ethical systems are forced to posit more coarse-grained concepts in order to formulate a coherent theory: “in the final analysis, ethical principles cannot be posited unless we bring forward such *ideas* as that of a super-individual self, the happiness of society, or the welfare of humankind” (italics mine, R 10). Watsuji holds that this level of conceptualization is necessary in order to prevent a reductive caricature of moral life. Moreover, this necessity “indicates precisely that ethics is not a matter of individual consciousness alone” (R 10). For Watsuji, to look exclusively to the individual, rather than the relationships between people, is a basic methodological mistake. He writes, “The locus of ethical problems lies not in the consciousness of the isolated individual, but precisely in the in-betweenness of person and person” (R 10). By examining “betweenness,” ethics analyzes the structures relating individuals together, thereby making it possible to legitimately pose questions concerning good and bad actions, obligations, responsibilities, etc. However, in order to help clarify this notion of “betweenness,” it is worth reflecting on the etymology of *ningen sonzai* or “human existence / being” (人間存在).

According to Watsuji, *ningen* originally denoted the “public,” but later came to incorporate the broader meaning of “humankind” and eventually the particular meaning of “human being.” Watsuji argues that the capacity of *ningen* to assimilate these extensions in meaning reflects a concrete fact of human existence. He notes that a number of words, such as *nakama* (仲間 “fellows”), *rôtô* (郎党 “group”), *tomodachi* (友だち “friends”), and *heitai* (兵隊 “soldiers”), simultaneously refer to both the group and the members that define it. Thus, he concludes that “[t]hese words obviously show that, in so far as human

existence is concerned, the whole exists in the parts and the parts in the whole" (R 15).

Moreover, in terms of the characters comprising *ningen*, the first character, *nin* 人, refers to "person," while the second character, *gen* 間 (also pronounced *aida* or *ma*), means "space," "interval," or "between." Thus, for Watsuji, relationality as "betweenness" is fundamental to the very being of *ningen*.

Watsuji further underscores the importance of adequately conceptualizing relational structures by examining the etymology of *rinri* (倫理 "ethics"). He points out that *rin* 倫 corresponds to *nakama* 仲間, which designates the meaning "fellows" or "companions." That is, "a body or a system of relations, which a definite group of persons have with respect to each other, and at the same time signifies individual persons as determined by this system" (R 11). In the concrete reality of human existence, *ningen* is never a bare element, but always a constituent within some social system(s). It is only by abstracting *ningen* from its actual existence that the individual *qua* methodological individualism can be conceptualized. Against this reductive abstraction, Watsuji contends that the *sonzai* of *ningen* consists of being *neither* individualistic *nor* holistic, but in the negative movement from one to the other. *Ningen* becomes an individual by negating its sociality and becomes social by negating its individuality—beneath these negative moments *ningen* is "fundamental emptiness" (i.e., non-essentiality). As a consequence, *ningen's* existence as incessant becoming through negation is nothing other than absolute negativity or emptiness.

In the development of his position, Watsuji raises the point that *rin* 倫 can signify the "form" (*kata* 型) of *nakama* in general, as well as the actualized relations that factually

exist. He further notes that the “five human relations” of Confucianism comprise “the grand *rin* of human beings,” because it formally describes the basic kinds of fellowships (*nakama*) that are possible (R 11). Thus, according to Watsuji, *nakama* informs future relational possibilities on the basis of a concrete history of relations, such that the consciousness of future possibility is grounded in the actuality of the past: “when dynamic human existence is actualized repeatedly, in a definite manner, we can grasp this pattern that constantly makes its appearance in separation from the basis of this dynamic sort of existence” (R 11). Consequently, the character *ri* (理 “pattern, principle, or reason”) of *rinri* highlights the intelligibility inherent in this historical ordering and patterning of human activities.

It is against this background of social intelligibility and *ningen's* non-essentiality that Watsuji challenges intentionality as unilateral and as simply-located in the individual. For Watsuji, if the intelligibility of the world is, at bottom, an extension of sociality, then the very capacity to be *about* anything at all is a functional extension of sociality. Watsuji's point, here, is that mind as “intelligibility” is historical sociality, which means that it is not something internal to us (i.e., something in our heads) nor is it something reducible to brain states. Hence, he speaks of “betweenness” as a way of keeping in sight the inherent sociality underwriting our capacity for being oriented within an intelligible world. In this respect, Watsuji's position approximates Heidegger's position in *Being and Time*. Hubert Dreyfus explains, “the source of intelligibility of the world is the average public practices through which alone there can be any understanding at all.”⁵⁸ Despite his ambivalence about *das Man* as the source for our pre-understanding of the world and

⁵⁸ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World. A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991, 155.

Dasein's inauthenticity, Heidegger fully recognizes the necessity of such a social understanding for there to *be* world at all—hence *das Man* as an *Existenziale*. Moreover, it is only on the basis of this concept of world as already intersubjectively interpreted that Heidegger can launch his critique against Husserl's monadic conception of intentionality. Inspired by Heidegger's account, John Haugeland argues for the background of social practices and instituted norms as constituting the "original intentionality" from which all other forms of intentionality are derived:

The instituted intentionality of *public* symbols is *original intentionality*. The extant normative order in the communal pattern is *sui generis* and self-sustaining, via the mechanism of conformism; it is the fountainhead of all intentionality, public and private. Thus, insofar as this order is imposed on the behavior or states of individual community members in such a way as to confer intentionality on them, that resulting private intentionality is *derivative*.⁵⁹

This brief detour into Heidegger, Dreyfus, and Haugeland was intended to clarify how it is that I take Watsuji's conception of betweenness as (1) a description of concrete patterns of intersubjectivity, as (2) a description of ("original") intentionality, and (3) as thoroughly normative in structure.

With the requisite interpretive background in place, it is appropriate to turn to a key passage in which Watsuji discusses betweenness in terms of the "matter" (*koto* 事)⁶⁰ about which *I* and *Thou* speak:

⁵⁹ John Haugeland, *Having Thought. Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998, 156; hereafter indicated as "HT."

⁶⁰ It is rather telling that the term *koto* (事), meaning "thing" or "matter," contains a basic internal relationship with the homophone *koto* (言), meaning "words," "language," or "to say": "the idea that the 'thing' referred to by a given word is coeval as well as coextensive with the 'word' that refers to it is at the heart of the whole matter," see R. A. Miller, "The 'Spirit' of the Japanese Language." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 3.2, 264. Also see Graham Parkes essay, "Afterwords—Language" in Graham Parkes ed. *Heidegger and Asian Thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 213-216. Parkes writes, "Koto can now be understood as *die Sache des*

For example, suppose that something important is spoken within an intimate relationship between *I* and *Thou*. It is never the case that, when listening to a series of spoken words, I experience a mere succession of sounds, that is, a succession of *nows*. Instead, I grasp the manner in which an advance in my relationship to *Thou* is made in parallel with what *Thou* speaks. The *koto* of which *Thou* speaks discloses the manner in which *Thou* is concerned with *me*, and at the same time, draws out the manner in which I concern myself with *Thou*. Therefore, if words are broken off in the midst of saying something of importance, it is not that *I* hear a mere succession of sounds that are somehow interrupted. Instead, I feel a strong tension, that is, an extraordinary continuity of words about to be spoken. Or, if I am impressed by something said and this something is intermingled with the rest of what is spoken, then I may pause in my listening at that one thing, even though words continue to flow one after another. The continuity is interrupted. What I hear is not a succession of sounds, but the *koto* that expresses the betweenness of *I* and *Thou*. Even though this *koto* is spoken by *Thou* by means of her voice, the *koto* itself is communally retained between *I* and *Thou* (trans. mod., R 77).

The first thing to note about this passage is the semantic parallel between the Japanese notion of "*koto*" and the German notion of "*Sache*." Like *Sache*, *koto* marks the "third thing," the matter, around which a conversation gathers. Indeed, Watsuji is providing an account of how a conversation depends on the publicity of the *koto* and how the publicity of the *koto* emerges from such conversations. This bi-directional description of meaning's emergence from past betweenness and its subsequent reinvestment though present betweenness is precisely why Watsuji claims that the advance in the relationship of *I* and *Thou* is contemporaneous with *our* advances in understanding the *koto*. To put it somewhat differently, the relationship between *I* and *Thou* is intelligibly mediated by the *koto*, while the significance of the *koto* is mediated by *I* and *Thou's* relationship, that is, we not only approach each other in approaching the *koto*, but the way in which we approach the *koto* is also the way in which we approach each other. For example, to be dismissive

Denkens [...] Language as *koto* would then be that 'thing' which calls for thinking, the matter at hand as one plies the craft of thought" (215).

about the *koto* that matters to the Other is to be dismissive towards the Other. Thus, Watsuji contends that the *koto* “expresses the betweenness of *I* and *Thou*.”

Moreover, since Watsuji begins with “betweenness,” the question of my failing to understand the Other’s *koto* does not make sense. The exteriority of the betweenness allows for the exteriority of the *koto*: the *koto* is before us. It may very well be the case that this *koto* matters more to the Other than it does to me, but this difference in *significance* is not a difference in *understanding*, even though this difference in significance says something about the intimacy of our relationship. Indeed, in the most intimate relationships where there is a significant overlap in life histories and life projects, this differential tends towards zero—your problem is my problem, and my joy is your joy. In relation to grief, Watsuji comments,

For parents who have a child, concern for their child is shared by both. Therefore, were they to lose their child, their grief would be a common grief. They would feel the same grief at the same time. Father and mother know from the start that they are lamenting the same lament, without having to pay attention to each other’s experiences (R 70).

To be sure, since there are always real differences between *I* and *Thou* regardless of how intimate the relationship may be, i.e., real differences in personal histories, commitments and goals, fears and aspirations, strengths and weaknesses, etc., there will always exist real differences in the ultimate significance of a given *koto*. Watsuji’s notion of betweenness, therefore, can account for differences in what might be called *existential stances* vis-à-vis a given *koto*, and yet these differences can never solidify into an impenetrable wall between myself and the *koto* of Other, because the betweenness that allows the Other to

meaningfully orient herself towards the *koto* is the same betweenness that allows for my meaningful orientation towards it.⁶¹

To further explicate betweenness, it is necessary to consider Watsuji's conception of "communal retention": "What is sought must be a betweenness-oriented retention. In fact, the retention of consciousnesses that interpenetrate into another can and must be communal. [...] Only through this communal retention does the betweenness of *I* and *Thou* arise, with its own historical development" (R 77). Watsuji argues for communal retention in order to ward off the reduction of intersubjectivity as ultimately *founded on* monadic intentionality: "Behind the various sorts of community must lay the noncommunal unity of individual consciousness. This assertion is made on the assumption that an act of consciousness consists in a one-directional act of intentionality" (R 77). Taken together, these last two quotations make it clear that Watsuji understands betweenness as the bi-directional interpenetration of consciousnesses⁶²:

⁶¹ As intimacy in life projects differ, Watsuji acknowledges real differences in relation to the significance of a life event, while still not reifying this difference in terms of isolated ego-consciousness: "Thus, together with a friend we may lament the death of her child and share her grief. The grief is obviously not the same grief that would be experienced at the death of our own child. Still, it might be called *grief* nonetheless. Even if I have no reason to lament and find myself in a particularly delightful frame of mind, my consciousness tends to take on a gloomy air overall because I feel my friend's grief. As a consequence, I not only shrink from acting flippantly but even consider it inexcusable for me to find enjoyment, in contrast with my friend who grieves. In this case, my ego consciousness is penetrated by her grief" (R 70-1).

⁶² It might appear as though Watsuji is equivocating with respect to betweenness, namely, it is the bi-directional relation between two consciousnesses *and* the condition for the possibility of that act of relating. However, Watsuji's conception of temporality works to integrate these two senses: past-betweenness constitutes the transcendental aspect of betweenness, while the relation between two consciousness in the present defines present-betweenness (with its attending future-directedness), which works to mediate past-betweenness by affirming, modifying, or negating it.

Hence, my becoming conscious of *Thou* is inextricably interconnected with your becoming conscious of me. This interconnection we have called *betweenness* is quite distinct from the intentionality of consciousness. [...] Hence, so far as betweenness-oriented existences are concerned, each consciousness interpenetrates the other. When *Thou* gets angry, my consciousness may be entirely colored by *Thou's* expressed anger, and when I feel sorrow, *Thou's* consciousness is influenced by *I's* sorrow (R 69).⁶³

And, what is more, Watsuji understands that meaning must be communally shared *and* communally retained: "Were it not for this communal retention, it [a fire alarm *signified* by a succession of three sounds] could not be established as a kind of expression" (R 78).

Indeed, a large part of *Rinrigaku* is taken up with Watsuji's attempt to account for how and where significance is publicly retained. Watsuji's methodological strategy for locating the communal retention of significance, i.e., past betweenness, is to focus on the manner in which the existence (*sonzai*) of *ningen* in "activity" spatially and temporally inscribes itself through practices (e.g., tools), institutional structures (e.g., the postal system), environmental modifications (e.g., roads), and technological innovations (e.g., telecommunications). *Ningen's* activities essentially *humanize* the environment by patterning it according to persistent human needs e.g., roads emerged as environmental modifications expressing the need for commerce between communities, while the emergence of the telephone as a technological artifact expresses the need for

⁶³Watsuji explains the movement of this interpenetration in terms of betweenness as incorporating intentionality: "the betweenness of person and person is something beyond intentionality. Intentionality never becomes an object of intentionality, but in the betweenness, intentional activity itself is determined already as an object of intentionality" (R 33). Moreover, this incorporation of first-order intentionality can only be achieved because betweenness already includes concrete interpretations (i.e., ontological pre-understandings) of the world: "In an endeavor to distinguish betweenness from intentionality, I have pointed out that the activity of seeing is never one-sided but conditioned by a relationship of mutuality. If this is true, then a way of seeing, such as casting a furtive glance at something, *already involves a definite understanding of the partner's attitude*" (italics mine, R 35).

communication across distance.⁶⁴ In other words, pathways were worn between communities by repeated traveling by those who had established, or wanted to establish, relationships in distant communities. Eventually, those paths became roads reflecting the ongoing development of relationships between communities, while on the contrary, where relationships do not exist between communities neither do roads. Hence, it is via material investments and durable social practices, or what Haugeland calls “normative orders” grounded in communal conformism, communal self-censoring, and communal scorekeeping, that the significance of betweenness is retained. On the basis of this historical retention, then, present and future betweenness can be “historically developed.”

Watsuji’s talk of the “interpenetration of consciousnesses” is not mystical, but simply reflects the fact that self and Other move within a shared understanding predicated on the communal retention of betweenness. Hence, Watsuji’s criticism of one-sided analyses of intentionality: “The dictum that ‘I am conscious of *Thou*’ is a simplified formulation of the consciousness of betweenness. Moreover, the interpenetration of consciousnesses, however different in degree, cannot be got rid of, for it ranges from the most intimate *I/Thou* relationship to a temporary one ” (R 69). In place of this one-sided conception, Watsuji sees intentionality as already mutually determined by Other-power: “The essential feature of *betweenness* lies in this, that the intentionality of *I* is from the outset prescribed by its counterpart, which is also conversely prescribed by the former” (R 51).

⁶⁴ While “need” constitutes the most primitive motivation for human activity, and therefore serves as the bootstrapping mechanism for the constitution of normativity with respect to betweenness, these needs are quickly supplemented by other values as norms begin to stack up on norms. For example, while routes between communities may have originally emerged from the need to exchange basic goods, once subsistence needs begin to be met, the resulting relationships can themselves become centers of value just as persuasive in shaping future activities.

As a philosophical position, however, Watsuji's conception does not entail that betweenness is wholly determining nor completely transparent, which is to say that self and Other need not share a common understanding with respect to every aspect of a situation. Rather, it simply points to a *minimal background* of shared understanding *against which* higher-orders of disagreement get their traction—we can fail to see eye-to-eye only because we stand in a common field (*basho*), which allows us to face each other at all. A completely alien Other is the stuff of science fiction. While substantial cultural differences clearly exist, these differences at the level of culture are intelligible as “differences” against, for example, a shared biology that expresses itself in a common phenomenological experience of embodiment.⁶⁵

The resolute exteriority of betweenness carries over, for Watsuji, into such key normative concepts as *makoto*. Simply rendered, *makoto* refers to “sincerity” or “truthfulness,” but, once again, these notions do not represent psychological states or attitudes. Rather, *makoto* represents an ontological feature of *ningen's sonzai*. Watsuji begins from the premise that betweenness is relatively resilient, and this can be cashed out in the claim that trust is *presumptive*. This presumptive dimension of trust is evidenced by

⁶⁵ Here again, my claim is rather weak, that is, I am thinking about the most primitive features of “embodiment,” see Ch. 4 of Samuel Todes, *Body and World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, for a sense of this basic, pre-cultural, level of embodiment. By “pre-cultural,” here, I mean that embodiment is *not* culturally constructed, even if the *meaning* of embodiment is. Culture subsists in meaning (constitutive interpretations of existence), and this meaning can get an interpretive grip on the world because it is propositionally available. But embodiment is non-propositional (i.e., non-conceptual), therefore embodiment is not culturally constituted, but cultural constituting. Watsuji has some very interesting things to say about the role of embodiment in developing betweenness. According to Watsuji, betweenness possesses a *bodily dimension*: “To the extent that we understand the meaning of their dialogue, we experience bodily the betweenness of others, which may then develop even further” (R 78). And elsewhere, “[w]hen *I* as the subject of practice stands face to face with *Thou*, *Thou* stands face to face with *I* as the subject of practice. One's physical body exhibits personality in every part and, hence, lures another's personality in its every motion. It strengthens opposition through hostility and gives birth to unity through affection. It exemplifies what it means 'to be outside' through coolness and draws toward 'the inside' through friendliness” (R 156).

the fact that even “where the connection of human beings with each other is weakest [...] People walk in the midst of a crowd without having to prepare to defend themselves” (R 267). Watsuji contends that this stability of betweenness stems from the prevalence of *makoto* over betrayal, that is, the general condition of truthfulness in the acts of *ningen* represents the condition for the possibility of trust. And yet, while this point sounds quite Kantian (e.g. lying is predicated on a climate of reliability), truth-telling is not at the core of *makoto*:

The truthfulness of a human being is the truth of, or the real feature of, a human being. We have traced the real feature of *ningen sonzai* from its negative structure up to its spatio-temporal one. [...] Hence, *ningen sonzai*'s real feature or truth occurs in the movement of a spatio-temporal coming back but has nothing to do with what occurs nonspatially and nontemporally. Human beings become individuals negatively in subjective space/time and also realize their socio-ethical unity in a negative fashion. Then, the truth of *ningen* takes place (R 272).

Watsuji's conception of truthfulness returns to his conception of *ningen sonzai* as absolute negativity. Thus, *truthfulness* denotes a basic existential-ontological feature of *ningen*, namely, the continual happening of absolute negativity, which must be differentiated from *propositional truth*: “‘truthfulness,’ or *makoto* in Japanese, has nothing to do with contemplative/noematic truth—what is usually called the *correspondence* between thinking and its object in the outer world” (trans. mod., R 272). Like Heidegger's critique of truth as “correctness,” Watsuji's view takes propositional truth as derivative: “truthfulness turns out to be truth by being transferred to a contemplative standpoint” (R 272). On Watsuji's view, propositional truth is founded on the truthfulness of *ningen*'s way of being in the world.

An etymological examination of *makoto* provides further insight into this claim that “truthfulness” is neither subjective (i.e., a psychological attitude) nor objective (i.e., a

correspondence to reality). Firstly, Watsuji points out that the Chinese character *cheng* 誠 (J. *sei*) has been used to denote *makoto*, and secondly, that *makoto* can be further “re-translated” into “sincerity” (*seijitsu* 誠實), “veracity” (*shinjitsu* 眞實), “fidelity” (*chûjitsu* 忠實) (R 273), and “honesty” (*shôjiki* 正直) (R 282). Indeed, a close look at the cluster of Chinese characters used to express the Japanese sense of *makoto*—誠 / 信 / 眞 / 實—reveals a provocative ambiguity. The first two characters both contain the radical *gen* 言, indicating speaking and language-use. In the first one, *gen* appears next to *sei* 成 meaning “to realize; to accomplish; to perform,” while in the second it shows up alongside *hito* 人, meaning “person.” In both instances, the significance of *makoto* is expressed in terms of “realizing or standing by one’s word.” The second two characters *shin* 眞 and *jitsu* 實, however, have nothing to do with language. Rather, they concern the concrete facts of the world. *Shin* is often translated as “truth,” but in the sense of truth as “disclosure” rather than in terms of correspondence, and therefore is perhaps better rendered as “genuine” or “authentic.”⁶⁶ *Jitsu* rather straightforwardly refers to actuality, facticity, and concrete reality. I contend that this ambiguity between associating *makoto* with language and associating it with facticity is a *productive ambiguity* supporting the

⁶⁶ It consists of the radicals *choku* 直 (“straight, correct, simplicity, frankness, direct”), modified with *hi* 匕 (“to change, transform”) on the top, and *kotsu* 兀 (“pedestal, lofty”) on the bottom. The implication of the radicals is that simplicity and directness of character transforms and elevates one, e.g., the Daoist ideal of the “genuine person” (*zhenren* 眞人).

undecidability of *makoto* as neither subjective nor objective.⁶⁷ Indeed, if one takes seriously the idea that mind is the relation between individual and environment, then this inability to locate *makoto* in terms of the inner/outer dichotomy is to be expected. Consequently, I understand *makoto* as characterizing the *primary normative relation* between self and alterity. *Makoto* represents a seamless transparency between individual and situation that not only preserves the integrity of betweenness, but also deepens its intensity. *Makoto* is, simply put, intimacy-realizing: "If ambiguity and not entitative existence is held basic, morality is most naturally not an orientation toward preserving integrity, but towards intensifying intimacy" (LI 189). In the end, then, I prefer the language of "sincerity" for expressing *makoto*. The notion of "truthfulness" is problematic, because it lends itself to a superficial interpretation *qua* mere "truth-telling," and while *authenticity* is appropriate in some respects, it lacks the sense of *deference* evoked by sincerity, which I take to be an integral semantic component of *makoto*. For example, is being "too sincere" a coherent criticism? To claim that someone is being *overly* sincere is ultimately to claim that he is being insincere. And yet, to say that someone is being too truthful or too authentic does not indicate that she is being untruthful or inauthentic, but it does indicate a level of self-concern that can constitute a failure to be Other-regarding. It is not clear that the same problem exists with sincerity, precisely because it is inherently deferential. Sincerity possesses a qualitative dimension, namely, that of being Other-regarding and not simply Other-directed, which cannot be absent without sincerity falling into insincerity. Strictly speaking, one cannot *try* to be *makoto*, because sincerity is the

⁶⁷ While above, Watsuji rejected reducing *makoto* to objective correspondence, in this passage, he rejects reducing *makoto* to a psychological state: "What I insist on is that *magokoro* ("a true heart" [真心]), regarded here as an individual's attitude of mind, is none other than *makoto* inherent in the trust relationship as grasped from the standpoint of individual psychology" (R 277).

natural expression of the overcoming of the inner/outer dichotomy wherein truthfulness *qua* existential comportment is always thoroughly situated and thereby oriented by a context of appropriateness. Like a cork bobbing on the ocean, genuine *makoto* naturally follows the contours of the water's surface without effort, responding casually to its relaxed ripples or dramatically to its rolling waves. Hence, sincerity (*makoto*) is natural, truthful, appropriate, and Other-guided.

4.6 Nishitani: *Śūnyatā* (kū 空) and Other-directedness

In the first chapter, I reviewed Nishitani's critique of representation in order to demonstrate that much of our theorizing about alterity has remained committed to a false dichotomy between Kant's transcendence and Hegel's identification, both of which are predicated on a representational epistemology. In this intervention, I am interested in revisiting Nishitani's provocative statement: "the nature of the task of the *ought* [*arubeki* あるべき] is the other-directedness of the *is* [*aru no kôtasei* 「ある」の向他性]" (RN 260). In order to appreciate the full import of this claim, it is necessary to explicate Nishitani's conception of the standpoint of *śūnyatā* as a rejection of essence and a concomitant rejection of representational modes of knowing and being with Others.

Contra Kant and Hegel, Nishitani raises a fundamentally Buddhist anxiety with respect to the dangers involved in any metaphysical or epistemological commitment to substance or essence. For the Buddhist, a commitment to substance is the ultimate source of suffering (*dukkha*) of the self and violence towards the Other, because the misguided belief in the stability of the world understood as "permanence" is reflected in the rigidity of the self understood as "ego." Such a rigid self is incapable of successfully coping with the

world, hence suffering, and incapable of peacefully co-existing with Others, hence conflict.

This generalized Buddhist anxiety is given an even narrower theoretical focus when Nishitani rejects any ascription of essence, because it performs an unjustified restriction of a thing's *being* to our representation of it: "whether the *selfness* of a thing can really be grasped and really given expression by means of the notion of substance. To be sure, the concept of substance brings to the surface the mode of being of the thing as it is in itself. Yet, this invariably restricts the selfness of a thing to the way that thing is disclosed to us on the field of reason" (RN 119). Such a restriction of the selfness of a thing to how it appears *for us* violates and humiliates it.⁶⁸

Rather than a theoretical critique of reason, and its attendant commitment to representation, Nishitani points to the existential critique performed through the experience of nihility (虚無 *kyomu*). It is the bursting forth of nihility, according to Nishitani, that ultimately exposes the limits of reason, and thus it is the only critique capable of dislodging the economy of representations. Simply put, when the "field of nihility" surfaces in a confrontation with death, sin, or despair, reason can offer no consolation and thereby reveals its incapacity to provide a *ground* for meaning, truth, or value. The faith and comfort in the foundation of the Cartesian subject quickly dissipates

⁶⁸Rorty's discussion of humiliation as "forced re-description" in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, is helpful for clarifying how the restriction of "what a thing is" to our perspective inflicts a form of violence. However, unlike Nishitani, Rorty holds that the violence of such re-description only affects human beings, because it challenges our self-understanding, whereas beings that are not self-aware cannot have their self-understanding challenged. On Nishitani's view, such violence is not predicated on the subjective mental state of the victim, but is an immediate fact about our treatment of the Other and, indirectly, the treatment of our selves. Secondly, from the standpoint of the Buddhist project, it is also a form of self-violence as it reinforces an egoistic desire for power, permanence, and the possession of a thing through knowledge, while at the same time, frustrating (*dukkha*) the ego with the awareness that any such ascription of essence fails to truly touch a thing in its originating-situation.

when the epistemic self-certainty of its presence on the field of reason faces the contingencies of time and the primordial realization of its own ontological impermanence. It is in the depth of this existential confrontation that essence yields to existence and wisdom blossoms into a newly transformed epistemic humility⁶⁹: “The field of nihility is rather the appearance of the self-awareness that the selfness of things and the self are utterly beyond the grasp of cognition” (RN 136). This language of humility is not specifically Nishitani’s, but I contend that much of the moral import of Nishitani’s analysis in particular, as well as the tacit background of Buddhist ethics in general, is captured by this specific conception of humility.

As “emptiness,” *śūnyatā* refers to the absence of substance conceived in terms of absolute ontological independence: self-subsistence. Indeed, the basic Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-origination instructs us that all beings have an origin dependent on the past existence of Others, a present existence dependent on the co-existence of Others, and a future existence dependent on the future existence of Others.⁷⁰ Thus, the standpoint of *śūnyatā* emerges beneath the field of nihility as a *cultivated return* to a more spontaneous

⁶⁹ This linkage between wisdom and humility is not entirely foreign to the West, as it was the central teaching of Socrates.

⁷⁰ More specifically, Nishitani is influenced by the *Tiantai* and *Huayan* developments of the notion of dependent co-origination as mutual implication, mutual involvement, and mutual interpenetration. For example, in the classic *Huayan* text, *Hundred Gates to the Sea of Ideas of the Flowery Splendor Scripture*, Fazang writes, “[I]f the dust involves the others, then the others become hidden and the dust becomes manifest. If the others involve the dust, then the dust becomes hidden while the others become manifest. Being hidden and being manifest are identical, for at the moment of being manifest it is already hidden” Wing-Tsit Chan, ed. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Trans. Wing-Tsit Chan. New Jersey: Princeton, 1963, 417. Compare Fazang’s statement with Nishitani’s description: “To say that a thing is not itself means that, while continuing to be itself, it is in the originating-ground of everything else [...] That a thing is itself means that all other things, while continuing to be themselves, are in the originating-ground of that thing; that precisely when a thing is on its own originating-ground, everything else is there too; that the roots of every other thing spread across its originating-ground [tr. mod.]” (RN 149). For Fazang and Nishitani, the identity of a thing is not contained within itself, but depends on the entire configuration of the Others constituting it. According to this standpoint, alterity lies at the ground of a thing’s identity, which makes sense of the paradoxical Buddhist claim that “it is not this thing or that, therefore it is this thing or that” (RN 124).

selfhood marked by a dynamic open-ended understanding of Others and a naturally compassionate responsiveness towards Others: “this other-directedness or other-centeredness is an aspect of the mode of things in their selfness within the nexus of circumfluent interpenetration” (trans. mod., RN 260). The Buddhist ideal of the Bodhisattva provides a living example of the effortless double-manifestation of wisdom and compassion.⁷¹

Moreover, given our concerns with alterity and difference, it is noteworthy that the irreducible uniqueness of a thing revealed in nihilism is not sacrificed within the standpoint of *śūnyatā*, since nihilism is not overwritten by *śūnyatā* as though it were a more comprehensive metaphysical-logical view: “Multiplicity and differentiation, that is, the fact that it is impossible to substitute any one given thing for any other, the fact that each thing has its being as something absolutely unique, becomes really apparent only when the field of nihilism opens up at the ground of the system of being” (RN 145).⁷² Knowledge as it occurs on the field of reason affirms extrinsic relations between preexisting *relata*, that is, we understand a thing in terms of another, i.e., a subject in terms of a predicate or a particular in terms of a universal. In contrast, the field of nihilism marks a transformative encounter with the radical separation of things.⁷³ Indeed, the significance of the standpoint of nihilism extends beyond its negation of reason, because it delivers a revelation of

⁷¹ For Nishitani, the Bodhisattva Vow should not be mistaken as a compassionate (subjective) attitude, but the spontaneous compassion that is a directly manifest aspect of existence for beings that have returned to their originating-situation: “All [Four Great Bodhisattva Vows] are unlimited vows made in the face of unlimited realities. The original countenance of manifesting existence [現存在 *genzonza*] that emerges into its nature on the field of emptiness cannot be otherwise” (trans. mod., RN 271).

⁷² The experienced meaningless that characterizes the field of nihilism originates in this impossibility of establishing relationships between things.

⁷³ It is precisely this stage of nihilism and the experience of the abyss separating one from another that characterizes much of the phenomenological analyses of alterity in both Sartre and Levinas. In contrast, the experience of the “Nothing” (*das Nichts*) in *Being and Time* is followed by Heidegger’s description of a transformed return to Being-with (*Mitsein*) others.

uniqueness, multiplicity and difference into the standpoint of *sūnyatā* as positive experiential content.

Whereas the field of reason appropriates the world in terms of knowledge and instrumental action, the field of *sūnyatā* engages the world pragmatically in terms of wisdom and compassion. While reason grasps after a reductive notion of essence capable of exhausting a thing's being, Nishitani describes the transformed modes-of-being belonging to the field of *sūnyatā*—"non-objective knowing" (*muchi no chi* 無知の知) and "non-exertive action" (*musa no sa* 無作の作)⁷⁴—as sheltering the inexhaustibility of a thing: "On the field of emptiness, however, the selfness of a thing cannot be expressed simply in terms of its 'being one thing or another.' It is rather disclosed precisely as something that cannot be so expressed" (RN 124).⁷⁵ More precisely, the standpoint of *sūnyatā* engages the transient appearance of things in their self-so-ing (Skt. *tathatā*; J. *nyojitsu* 如実), which is the instance of its unique *dharma*-position within the overall process.⁷⁶ Thus, genuine

⁷⁴ Rather than following Van Bragt's literal translations of *muchi no chi* as "knowing of non-knowing" and *musa no sa* as "action of non-action," I have translated *muchi no chi* as "non-objective knowing" and *musa no sa* as "non-exertive action" in order to clarify, in a more precise sense, how the indicated privations modify the common sense notions of knowing and acting. Indeed, Nishitani quite explicitly glosses *muchi no chi* in terms of non-objective knowing: "Non-objective knowledge [*hitaishōteki na chi* 非對象的な知] of it, the knowing of non-knowing [*muchi no chi* 無知の知], means that we revert to the 'middle' of the thing itself" (RN 140).

⁷⁵ These ideas of "non-objective knowing" and "non-exertive action" owe a great deal to the Daoist prescriptions about *wuzhi* (無知 "non- (discursive) knowing") and *wuwei* (無為 "non- (coercive) action"). Note that the Japanese character of *mu* appearing in Nishitani's discussion of non-knowing and non-action is the same character as the *wu* of *wuzhi* and *wuwei*.

⁷⁶ The notion of *dharma*-position (法位 *hōi*) became an important Buddhist concept, particularly in the *Tiantai* and *Huayan* schools, for considering the particularity of a *dharma* within the unfolding process of dependent co-origination. Nishitani's notion of "originating-ground" and the related concept of the "middle" are developments on the basic Buddhist notion of *dharma*-position. More specifically, his use of the concept of "middle" reflects the *Tiantai* teaching of the three truths wherein the truth of the "middle" (中 *chū*) captures the mutual implication of the truth of the

wisdom does not chase after a reality behind appearance, instead it recognizes that all phenomena are *necessarily* illusory, that is, if one understands substance, permanence, or essence as metaphysical-epistemological categories opposing illusion: “all things are illusory [*karigen* 假現] in their true selfness as such” (RN 138).⁷⁷ Nishitani argues that this insight into this illusory nature of things is a form of non-representational understanding, which is to say that an intelligent, skillful, and moral encounter with an Other neither posits it as an object nor restricts its selfness to *our* representation of it⁷⁸: “This is not cognition of an object, but a non-cognitive knowing of the non-objective thing in itself; it is what we might call a non-intellectual knowing” (trans. mod., RN 139).⁷⁹ This Buddhist resistance to representational closure is never just a position vis-à-vis epistemology, because wisdom is an ethical stance.⁸⁰

emptiness (空 *kū*) and the truth of the temporary existence of phenomena (假 *ke*). Hence, to be in the middle is to recognize a thing’s phenomenal appearance as a unique event in the light of its fundamental interrelation with everything else.

⁷⁷ Also, “[a] bird flies and it is like a bird. A fish swims and it looks like a fish.’ The selfness of the flying bird in flight consists of its being *like* a bird; the selfness of the fish as it swims consists of its being *like* a fish. Or put the other way around, the ‘likeness’ [*gotoshi* 如し] of the flying bird and the swimming fish is nothing other than their true ‘suchness’ [*shinnyo* 真如]” (RN 139). Here, Nishitani is playing off the character *nyo* 如 meaning “to look like or resemble,” but which is also the character for “Thusness or Suchness” (*nyojitsu* 如実) and the “Thus Gone One” or *Tathāgata* (*nyorai* 如来).

⁷⁸ For an excellent discussion of moral skill as non-representational know-how and its relation to Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian practice, see Varela, Francisco J. *Ethical Know-How. Action, Wisdom, and Cognition*.

⁷⁹ Also, “[s]uch *original* [本来 *honrai*] selfness must lie beyond the reach of reason and be impervious to thought” (RN 120). Note that the character for “*hon*” forming the first part of the *honrai* suggests a notion of the self’s ontological source/origin, which in this Buddhist sense speaks to its dependency relations with Others, and should not be read simply in terms of the earliest or most “pure” configuration of the self.

⁸⁰ It is not accidental that the Buddhist Eightfold Path begins with “Right View” and “Right Conception” and ends with “Right Mindfulness” and “Right Concentration.” The Eightfold Path is not about adopting the correct theoretical worldview (representation), although that is its point of departure, rather as a *path* of cultivation, it is directed towards developing a dynamic and sensitive awareness to the immediacy of the world that 1) gives concrete experiential validation to the

But what of the uninitiated, the non-Buddhist, and the unenlightened? What can such an ethics of transformation with its supra-moral countenance teach to those of us with a more pedestrian concern for ethical theory and moral prescriptions? In other words, what immediate lessons can we glean from Nishitani's description of the field of *sūnyatā*? Let me conclude by briefly discussing the implications of Nishitani's view for a general ethics of alterity in terms of the specific content it gives to the virtue of humility. First, I will briefly outline what such humility means for the self, and secondly, what it means for the Other.

For the self—the field of *sūnyatā* involves a fundamental suspension of its egoistic standpoint for the sake of an ongoing compassionate turning to the Other: “It means that we straighten ourselves out [*wareware jishin o tadasu* 我々自身を正す] by turning [*mutte* 向って] to what does not respond to our turning, orientating ourselves to what negates our every orientation [*hōkō* 方向]” (RN 140).⁸¹ From this statement, we can extrapolate four basic features characterizing this model of humility: (1) the Other is free not to respond to our efforts, which means that (2) our reorientation is a fundamentally open-ended process requiring (3) continual vigilance and responsiveness, and finally, (4) its moral value is intrinsic to it as a compassionate posture and does not depend on achieving completion.⁸²

For the Other—such humility does not strive to restrict a thing to a final description or essence abstracted from a finite array of appearances. Rather, the Other is freed to

theoretical views provisionally adopted at the beginning of practice, and 2) that does not provide the *basis* for wisdom or compassion, but, for the Buddhist, *is* wisdom and compassion.

⁸¹ My continuing distinction between the standpoints of the self and the Other is a relative and pragmatic distinction for the purpose of clarity, but obviously to maintain these standpoints in any absolute sense would fundamentally misconstrue the entire import of Nishitani's analysis.

⁸² Indeed, the desire for closure, for the end of reorientation, would fundamentally negate the ethical significance of this posture, and would constitute a return to the standpoint of reason.

simply express its *dharma*-position in all of its uniqueness, subtlety, and concreteness. Consequently, Nishitani describes the standpoint of *sūnyatā* as allowing “each and every things that is [to] recover once again its power of concentration [*shūchū no chikara* 集中の力] for gathering itself into itself...Each thing is restored anew to its own *virtus* (*toku* 徳)—that individual capacity that each thing possesses as a display of its own possibility of existence” (RN 123).⁸³ From this description, we can tease out two moral benefits enjoyed by the Other in the wake of such humility: (1) the Other can recover and gather itself, presumably from its previous absorption in *our* conceptions and projects, and (2) in this recovery the Other is returned to its own potential for achieving practical and moral ends.

Hence, when he claims that “the nature of the task of the *ought* is the other-directedness of the *is*” (RN 260), Nishitani is making a significant claim about the very *quality* of our intentional relation to the world—indeed it is a claim about the attunement of our intentional relation to the concrete reality of existence. This attunement is, simply put, enlightenment (*satori* 悟り).⁸⁴ “Other-directedness” (*kôtasei* 向他性) refers to the phenomenological fact that my consciousness and actions are oriented by, and develop

⁸³ Van Bragt, the English translator of *Religion and Nothingness*, insists that Nishitani’s use of *toku* (Ch. *de*) only carries the meaning of *virtus* as “potential” and not its second meaning as “moral strength,” even though the Japanese term possesses both senses. Frankly, I do not see that the Chinese or Japanese traditions provide any grounds for separating the ontological notion of “potential” from the ethical notion of “moral power,” or more crudely put, separating fact from value. Indeed, the character in question is the character for *de* in the *Daodejing* of Laozi, which is, at bottom, a discussion concerning moral leadership. Moreover, the significance of Laozi’s text for Japanese moral thinking is evidenced by the fact that the very word for “morality,” *dōtoku*, consists of the character for *dao* (道 *dō*) and the character for *de* (徳 *toku*).

⁸⁴ Note that the character for *satori* reflects the transparency of mind as constituted by openness (directedness) to the world, namely, the left radical, “heart-mind” (*kokoro* 心) points to the fact that authentic affectivity and sapience is tied to the embodied and embedded notion of “self” (*go* 吾). As enlightenment, then, *satori* marks the consummate mode of comportment in the world, namely, affective intelligence as constituted by the proper embeddedness/openness to the world.

around, the Other. Thus, quite literally, the Other is the very content of my being-in-the-world (my intelligent action). From the standpoint of *śūnyatā*, moreover, being Other-directed is inextricably coupled with *Other-centeredness* (*tasha chūshinsei* 他者中心性), which marks the difference between the estranged intentionality of theoretical-practical reason and the ethico-intentional comportment of *śūnyatā*. In and of itself, being Other-directed is morally inadequate, that is, if I remain self-centered (*jiko chūshinsei* 自己中心性). For example, to coerce the Other is to be Other-directed, but it is not to be Other-centered. Indeed, being Other-directed and self-centered defines, for the most part, the basic ontological structure of the field of reason. The fundamental difference between “reason” and “emptiness” concerns a qualitative difference in my way (*dao*) of being with respect to the Other. As long as I remain self-centered and Other-directed, I preserve the distance between self and Other, and thereby our mutual alienation. However, to be Other-centered and Other-directed on the field of *śūnyatā* is to replace estrangement with compassionate relation. When the Other becomes the content of my being—not merely the content of my consciousness—in the sense of being both Other-directed and Other-centered, the realization of this Otherness constitutes the very ground of my activity. This is in sharp contrast to the standpoint of reason (self-centeredness) in which the advance of the self informs my way of being Other-directed (rational self-interest).

Let me end by briefly entertaining an objection: one might contend that this talk of Other-centeredness and Other-directedness fails to provide any real moral content. However, this objection presumes that moral content (*ought*) is a guiding mechanism external to the immediate situation (*is*)—e.g., a rule, a maxim, or principle. From a phenomenological perspective, however, I suggest that the Other is, strictly speaking, the

moral content. At the very heart of normativity is a conception of directedness, which is to say that to be moved by a norm or value is to act in the direction of realizing it.⁸⁵

Phenomenologically, my actions gather their orientation by the inherent directionality of perceived value. The Other, then, becomes the *grounding moral norm/value* of my actions: I aim to realize this Other as a value. On this view, there is a real distinction between “moral” content as my immediate “caring-about” this Other, which is the ethical “aim” of my actions and an intrinsic aspect of the situation, and the “pragmatic-theoretical” content of how to “care-for” this Other, which is a second-order question of knowing how to mediate this situation. On Nishitani’s view, ethics is clearly not a question of “pragmatic-theoretical” coherence as such, which would allow theoretical commitments and norms of rationality (i.e., the standpoint of reason) to guide action. This is not to dismiss knowledge and experience in successfully mediating a given situation; rather it is, at bottom, to recognize that the being of the Other provides the primordial norm that ought to guide our action. In other words, response only becomes responsibility when it returns to the Other as the original point of departure.⁸⁶ Thus, ethics, for Nishitani, is an authentic comportment (sincerity and humility) towards alterity, which expresses the ontological intimacy—*sūnyatā*—of our shared existential situation.

⁸⁵ The normativity of intentionality is revealed in the fact that there is a coherent notion of failure accompanying it, namely, I can be wrong in my directedness. That is, what I (my consciousness, actions, etc.) purport to be about is not what I discover I am about. Moreover, I am never merely oriented towards things, but always oriented towards things in a definite way. When my way of being oriented towards Others is egocentrically structured, then I am only indirectly engaged with Others as a means for realizing what I am directly oriented towards. However, when my being oriented towards Others is Other-centered, then I am about Others, in direct sense, as ends to be realized. Kant’s second formulation of the Categorical Imperative—“Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means”—is one way of cashing out the moral difference between these orientational modalities.

⁸⁶ This return to the Other in ethical response parallels phenomenology’s epistemological return to *die Sache*.

4.7 Summary:

In this summary, I want to make the role of this genealogy within the larger argument of this study explicit. Negatively speaking, this excursus provides an important “heterotopic” standpoint from which to deconstruct some of the most persistent assumptions informing the phenomenological tradition. The two fundamental presuppositions rendered conspicuous against the philosophical backdrop of these Japanese thinkers are (1) an internal conception of identity and (2) a corresponding internal conception of mind with its subsequent privileging of theoretical distancing over the intimacy of social relationships and embodied action. To be sure, there are moments in the history of phenomenology when the force of these presuppositions has been partially suspended. Indeed, the previous chapter attempted to secure, to some measure, a reading of the phenomenological tradition in terms of a waxing and waning sensitivity to the problematic consequences of such fundamental metaphysical assumptions, but nowhere in the continental tradition are these assumptions as radically and explicitly rejected. To be sure, this rejection reflects the distance, and subsequent freedom, that these thinkers enjoy in relation to these presuppositions, which have never been “natural” to the Japanese experience.⁸⁷

From a more positive standpoint, this genealogy provides distinct conceptual apparatuses that can contribute to the philosophical position being developed in this work. Even if one is deflationary about “metaphysical truth,” this encounter clearly provides a

⁸⁷ Elsewhere I have argued that Heidegger’s interest in Chinese and Japanese thought was less a reflection of his cosmopolitan spirit than it was a reflection of the fact that he saw the methodological and philosophical obstacles to cross-cultural philosophy as paralleling his effort to think beyond the bounds of metaphysics. See my “Differing Ways: *Dao* and *Weg*. Comparative, Metaphysical, and Methodological Considerations in Heidegger’s “*Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache*.” *Continental Philosophy Review* (forthcoming).

fresh vocabulary for *re-describing* the issues under consideration, which can be further differentiated in terms of contributing an *alternative* vocabulary and/or a *supplementary* vocabulary. An “alternative vocabulary” is predicated on assumptions that contradict the assumptions underwriting one’s native vocabulary, in which case the adoption of this Other-vocabulary requires revising some of one’s native assumptions as well as corresponding inferential connections between these assumptions. A “supplementary vocabulary,” on the other hand, provides for contrastive differences in terms of scope and intensity that do not necessarily challenge underlying assumptions or inferential norms. This being said, however, no re-description is ever a completely neutral translation, because every description includes an evaluative centre, which presupposes an implicit valuation about what aspects of experience to emphasize. These different emphases can result in real differences in what ultimately becomes the thematic focus within a larger inquiry. To my mind, this genealogy primarily offers an alternative vocabulary for approaching the question of the Other. This alternative vocabulary would include “intimacy,” “expression,” “naturalness,” and “sincerity” to name but a few terms.⁸⁸ It might seem strange to claim that such ordinary terms represent an alternative vocabulary. However, when one attends to the inferential entailments and entitlements with respect to the Japanese use of these terms, the differences become quite pointed. Indeed, it is precisely the divergence at the level of inferential norms that indicates the alterity of this tradition’s thought. And, from a methodological standpoint, I believe that a concrete thinking encounter with this Other-tradition can, for just such reasons, provoke a change in

⁸⁸ Indeed, it is no accident that these terms, which are interpreted solely from the standpoint of the *subject* in Western philosophical discourse (i.e., subjectivism), emerge as an alternative vocabulary.

the very *practice* of our thinking, and thereby a more adequate response to the question of the Other.

CHAPTER 5

A Phenomenological Analysis of Empathy

The previous two chapters have served a twofold purpose. Firstly, they have situated the question of the Other historically and cross-culturally. The genealogical, archaeological, and comparative situating of the question has helped specify its content and force and clarify the conceptual resources surrounding it. In short, it has allowed for a deeper appreciation of the question of the Other. Secondly, this situating has also enacted an important deconstruction, which is to say that it has helped liberate this account from at least some of the problematic assumptions informing our response to the Other. At the same time, this distancing of problematic assumptions has provided an opportunity for formulating a sense of what would constitute a more appropriate theoretical foundation. Thus, the current chapter will attempt to marshal this newly acquired liberation in order to tease out presuppositions that are more productive and construct a more adequate point of departure. Methodologically, it will take the form of a sustained revisiting of the phenomenological sketch introduced in the first chapter in the hopes of developing a more fine-grained analysis of the moments shaping our compassionate encounter with an Other.

5.1 Confession: "*This is my tragedy, this is my suffering...*"

The Other's confession of suffering discloses the Other's unique place amid a particular set of circumstances. He recounts the discovery of his illness, the betrayal of his lover, the death of his father, or the injustice befallen a friend. It is simply inaccurate to see these narratives as cataloging bare facts, since they explicate a situation in which the narrator is rooted and involved. Integral to these narratives is the fact that the narrator does not, and cannot, occupy a position of distance or "objectivity" with respect to the tragedy of these

events. We immediately recognize the situation as tragic, and already begin to intimate what these events *mean* for the Other.¹ It is not some hidden inner meaning that is the source of suffering, but the situation itself that is painful for the Other, and therefore the situation that our emotional responses are *about*. The more fully the Other explicates his situation, the more fully I can be said to appreciate the Other's suffering without, however, falsely appropriating his situational standpoint as mine. The Other's confidence provides the determinate context constituting the meaning of the Other's suffering and delineates the intentional content of our sharing.

On this view, empathy does not intend internal mental states, but the *worldly* predicament to which the Other directs our attention. As long as the phenomenon of empathy is conceived in terms of mental states, it is impossible to make sense of how it is the case that we do in fact empathize with the Other, and how it could be the case that the requisite notion of empathy would not compromise the sovereignty of the Other. Rather, it is possible to account for empathy without the corresponding fear of assimilating the difference of the Other, simply by shifting the attention to the conditions of the predicament producing suffering. Moreover, such a shift continues to make sense of our dependence on the epistemic privilege of the Other vis-à-vis his unique position in this situation, and thereby avoiding the danger of paternalism. Finally, such an externalized approach to empathy will eventually help clarify the relationship between epistemology and ethics, particularly in terms of the normative conditions in which they can be correlative, co-constituting, and mutually supportive.

¹ Here "mean" is not limited to "sense," but includes the material "effects" of the situation on the sufferer, and thus comes closer to Nishida's language of "expression."

5.1.1 Address and Invitation

A predicament shows up against a more or less interrelated background of projects. Hence, the force of a predicament is proportionate to the scope and intensity with which it disrupts a central project or the relative coherence of this larger background. For example, the loss of employment may reverberate across a range of personal and interpersonal projects, while more severe traumas can wreak such violence that it may become practically impossible to restore the background's coherence. Madness and suicide mark the outer limits of this breakdown, while the event of one's own death marks the annihilation of this meaning-giving background altogether and, as such, can never be a predicament for us *qua* actual event.²

To the extent that we participate in the process of disclosing the Other's predicament, we detach our attention from the proximal circumstances of our own projects and orient ourselves toward his. Most often, this participation takes the form of an elevated readiness towards what the Other presents. Here, Levinas's distinction between theoretical wakefulness as *self-conscious lucidity* and moral wakefulness as a *sobered vigilance* is significant. Levinas' distinction points to a qualitatively different order of orientation *qua* alterity:

² This is not to say that one's death cannot be a predicament for Others nor that the *anticipation* of one's own death cannot generate existential predicaments for oneself or practical predicaments for one's family and community.

This vigilance of the I coming from the depths of the subjectivity that transcends its immanence, this *de profundis* of the spirit, this bursting at the heart of the substance, this insomnia is described in Husserl, certainly, as intentionality. The I-in-wakefulness, *keeping watch on the object* [*veille à l'objet*], remains an objectivizing activity even beneath its axiological or practical life. It is on the alterity of the object or the shock of the real that the sobering up of awakening here depends. The affect undergone, the stimulation received, these shall come from the object, from that which "stands out" (*sich abhebt*) in immanence.³

On the one hand, Levinas is suggesting that theoretical wakefulness, which is to say intentionality, is parasitic on the "alterity of the object." In other words, Levinas's claim is ontological. He is arguing that the very capacity to move into a theoretical orientation depends on a more original orientation towards otherness. However, his expression—the "shock of the real"—says something different, and here his point is ethical. This claim suggests that the alterity of the Other shatters the detachment of the theoretical gaze.

Moral vigilance, then, speaks to a waking within wakefulness:

But we are asking whether lucidity—as perfection of knowing—is the most awakened wakefulness [*la veille la plus éveillée*]; even if it were necessary to acknowledge that vigilance, itself, demands to be recognized with lucidity. We are asking whether the watching [*veillée*] is a nostalgia for the equal, and not a patience for the Infinite. We are asking whether, consequently, as vigilance and watching, reason is not the unresolvable derangement of the Same by the Other—an awakening that shakes the state of wakefulness [...] It is not the passivity of inertia or of the effect, but rather sensibility: a pain of what dazzles and burns. There is more light in the eye than its state can receive, more contact than the skin can touch: the Same held in wakefulness by an other (OCW 31).

If we return to the concreteness of everyday experience, Levinas's point becomes clearer.

The crack in the voice, the concern in the face, or the tension in the body, bespeak a gravity that radically sobers our levity and *seizes our attention*. In this sense, then, the Other encroaches upon us. Thus, taking a detached theoretical stance towards an object

³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 199824; hereafter indicated as "OCW."

expresses the autonomous spontaneity of "I can" and the independence of the Same, while being shocked into moral vigilance is a waking to the Other, which expresses the responsibility of "I must" and the vulnerability of the Same. Normatively speaking, my failure to be attentive, which is to say my remaining lighthearted or theoretically distant in the shadow of the Other's grief, already constitutes a moral failure on my part, because I have failed to appropriately orient myself toward the Other. The Other's confiding is an address intended to draw us out of absorbed immersion in our world through the opening up of his.⁴ As such, it signifies a demand to be recognized as morally considerable, not theoretically considered.

Beyond disclosing his situation, the Other's confiding addresses *me* and extends an invitation. Confidence is not gossip, because this disclosure does not communicate mere information, but solicits my concern and involvement. Minimally, this address invites understanding in the form of a sincere appreciation of the situation. More often, though, it also summons a sympathetic response of consolation and/or rectification as natural extensions of appreciation.

Consolation seeks emotional comfort and psychological support in coping with a persistent predicament. Consolation is not about revising circumstances, but about easing the process of coming to accept lasting and durable predicaments. Such acceptance requires integrating the predicament into one's projects or recasting one's projects in a way that eventually mitigates or neutralizes its disruptive force. This mitigation involves *making*

⁴ This is where Levinas's critique of Heidegger gains its real force. For Heidegger, the confrontation with Nothing draws Dasein out of its absorption in its world by individualizing Dasein in the face of death, while according to Levinas, our confrontation with the destitution of the Other as orphan, widow, or stranger draws us out of enjoyment [*jouissance*] and individualizes us via moral responsibility (substitution) in the face of this Other.

sense of that which has ruptured the meaningfulness of our projects.⁵ By stretching our projects in order to accommodate what was heretofore “unaccommodatable,” we transform ourselves and adapt to the constraints of our newfound situation. We come to reckon with the difficult by reconciling ourselves to what cannot be made otherwise. In this coming to terms, our predicament gradually sinks into the larger background of our lives, and thereby slowly recedes towards inconspicuousness. When confronting a death, for example, nothing can be done in order to eliminate the fact of death as such. Instead, we come to accommodate the loss in our lives in such a way that the grief no longer dominates the foreground of our attention.⁶

The role of Others in the process of consolation can involve envisioning new ways or recasting our projects. Indeed, Others can introduce novel perspectives on the reconstitution of our projects and thereby offer us constructive distance from ourselves. But consolation is not primarily advice. Rather, I suggest that the proximity of intimates in the face of tragedy serves as an immanent reminder that much of what is most important in our meaning-giving background remains intact. The convening of one’s community of loved-ones in times of grieving is the concrete renewal of relationships that remain with us, namely, the very presence of these relationships *is the insistence of our background*. This insistence offers a vigorous resistance to the tragedy threatening to overwhelm our world. This is precisely why isolation leaves us more vulnerable to tragedy. Simply put, this

⁵ Viktor Frankl’s “logotherapy” is grounded in the human capacity to reinterpret their situation in such a way as to reposition themselves vis-à-vis trauma. See Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*. Trans. Ilse Lasch. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

⁶ If one simply fails to make sense of what has happened, then one remains suspended within the nihilism generated by the predicament. On the other hand, such accommodations that defuse the predicament can be healthy or unhealthy. In the latter case, consciousness may cope with the predicament through any number of pathologies: repression, disassociation, projection, etc. Nietzsche’s conceptions of *amor fati* and “eternal recurrence” represent two of the most rigorous and radical doctrines of accommodation.

insistence is an effort at preventing the foregrounded predicament from simply swallowing the entire horizon of meaning.

Rectification represents an altogether different mode of coping, since it seeks to transform the predicament by containing the scope and/or diminishing its intensity. Rectification utilizes power to directly modify the immediate circumstances generating the exigent situation. Similar to the inherent sociality of consolation, the power required for rectification is often communally located. That is, we often borrow on the efficacy of an extended community of family, friends, and institutional resources that possess the requisite power to alter the situation.

5.2 Counter-Confession: "I cannot imagine..."

The admission—"I cannot imagine what you are going through"—in the face of the Other's narrative is to confess a correlative helplessness to the Other. Since it is an explicit acknowledgement of the irreducibility of the Other's suffering to knowledge, this mode of response sustains the field of trust between myself and the Other. It expressly recognizes the fact that the Other occupies a unique position vis-à-vis his predicament, which in the concreteness of that relation is essentially inaccessible to imagination. The Other's position is necessarily unimaginable, because the definite *mineness* of the predicament for the Other cannot be sincerely represented in the imagination. The predicament *belongs* to the Other in a way that it can never belong to me. It is simply disingenuous to assert that I can imagine the Other's position *qua* his, because the very act of imagination presumes a distance, a freedom, from the concrete situation that is fundamentally unavailable to the Other and yet essential to his situation. Because the Other cannot escape his situation, I

cannot pretend to occupy it.⁷ It is simply a cruel pretense to maintain that imaginative simulations can serve as surrogates for the real.

Similarly, the notion of “substitution” that occupies a central place in Levinas’s later thought cannot be taken literally. Indeed, Levinas’s paradigms of the denuded Other—stranger, orphan, and widow—occupy essentially unsubstitutable positions.⁸ What would it mean to substitute myself for the widow, and thereby to appropriate her loss and her grief? The widow has lost *her* partner, the orphan has lost *her* parents, while the stranger’s foreignness is specific to *this* place, *this* time, and *this* community. In each case, the specificity of their predicaments is radically individualizing, because they each suffer from a burden for which no one can stand in. The existential particularity of their suffering exceeds any capacity to represent them. Levinas’s real insight concerning substitution is that the Other’s address is undecidable and non-deferrable: *the face of the Other picks me out by facing me*. This con-frontation of the Other chooses me as uniquely responsible,

⁷ My claim here is not directed towards the finite power of the imagination to represent a situation nor at an individual’s propensity for psychological and emotional identification. Rather, it is an ontological claim about the difference in the content between my *intending* of my situation and your *pretending* of my situation. While I may be able to vividly simulate his situation to the point that I even convince myself that it is mine, such psychological conviction does not erase the *fact* that it can never be my situation.

This point can be made even clearer if we remember that one’s position in a situation is not defined solipsistically, but includes an irreducibly social dimension that locates me in the world and constrains my relation to it. Immanent to my intentional content are lines of meaning stretching outward to a temporally extended and intersubjective world, precisely because that same world is a condition for the possibility of my intending at all. In other words, my orientation towards a situation is already partially structured by my community, my history, my future projects, my material conditions, etc., that are quite independent of my immediate subjective desires. Thus, even while I might try to psychologically retreat from an unhappy situation, my community will continue to locate me vis-à-vis that situation in consistent and well-defined ways. Even if my subjective relation to a situation becomes pathological such that I am utterly delusional about my relation to a situation, the remedial process includes a normative insistence about the reality of my position in the world, my identity, my family, my responsibilities, my relation to certain events, etc.

⁸ Clearly, Levinas notion of “substitution” requires a more complex and subtle analysis than can be taken up here. In particular, the crucial relation between radical passivity and substitution requires due consideration. Chapter 4 of his *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* contains Levinas’s most sustained articulation of “substitution.”

which is to say that while I cannot substitute myself for the Other, I am un-substitutable *in my responsibility* for this Other.

The declaration of my inability to imagine the Other's predicament is a qualitatively different mode of helplessness than what the Other experiences. It is an epistemic-pragmatic helplessness—a counter-confession of ignorance and humility. And yet, this counter-confession already presupposes an awareness of responsibility for the Other. In other words, I can only feel helpless because *I desire to act*. This incapacity is not an exemption from responsibility, but the recognition of my dependence on the guidance of the Other for the fulfillment of my responsibility. More precisely, it could be said that I await my action. I am "at-the-ready," but I do not yet know *how* I must act.

Consequently, this declaration of helplessness is already accompanied, whether explicitly verbalized or not, by a question indicating my responsibility and deference to the Other. Hence, the question, "Is there anything I can do?" follows closely on the heels of the confession, "I cannot imagine what you are going through." When asked sincerely, this question seeks direction from the Other, and thereby maintains the dignity of the Other as occupying a privileged standpoint for assessing his situation, even if he lacks the power to alter it.⁹

⁹ The obvious objection to this claim concerns "false consciousness." However, the question "Is there anything I can do?" need not be an *uncritical* listening to the Other. Rather, this question often initiates a dialogue in which the consciousness of the Other is *raised* in such a way that the Other is given the resources for providing a meaningful response to the question. Time and again, the problem of "false consciousness," as well as claims of "ignorance," serves as a justification for circumventing the Other's contribution. Developmental aid projects in the "third world" provide a host of examples of this chronic failure to listen to the Other, and thus the chronic failure of efforts to help the Other.

5.2.1 Assimilative Attitude: An Attempt at Identification

The initial phase of openness engages the Other *qua* knowledge in a struggle to assimilate the presence offered in his narrative. At this stage, assimilation is simply an honest effort at understanding the exigency of the Other's predicament. As such, it represents a necessary *moment* in our ethical comportment towards the Other.

However, if the assimilative attitude, the will to truth, *only* struggles to understand the predicament as something independent of the Other—as a mere token of interest—without vigorous attention to the predicament as *belonging* to the Other, in the strictest sense, then the assimilative attitude violates the Other. For example, pressing the Other for the “juicy” details of her predicament in order to satisfy my curiosity *loses sight* of the Other. But if understanding is mediated by a constant attention to the belongingness of this predicament to the Other, then the will to truth remains disciplined by respect. My desire to know must be restrained by a basic respect for the freedom of the Other to withhold those aspects she judges too intimate to share. To transgress these limits and ignore the Other's choices in the telling of her story, that is, choices about what to disclose, what not to disclose, what to emphasize, and what to downplay, constitutes a breach of confidence.¹⁰

Intimacy between friends, for example, concerns the sharing of experiences or projects that do not merely refer to each Other, but which are *integral* to one's self-narrative. That

¹⁰ In the context of psychoanalytic therapy or other such examples, the intrusion(s) into the telling of the Other occurs within a highly delineated context wherein supplementary legal and professional norms formalize the therapeutic situation relation, i.e., doctor-patient privilege is enforced by state laws and by professional codes of conduct, which extend beyond everyday moral expectations in terms of their explicitness and force. Watsuji Tetsurô makes this same point concerning the formal relation between a patient and a surgeon. The act of cutting into another's body, if it is to be moral, must occur within a sharply defined context, which we already recognize as extraordinary; see Watsuji's *Rinrigaku* 60.

is, experiences or projects that are constitutive of the integrity of one's self image and the sense of the continuity of one's life.¹¹ There can be nothing intimate about sharing anonymous information with no corresponding sense of vulnerability. Intimacy requires a sharing of that with which one identifies, and thereby a sharing that exposes and renders one vulnerable. Consequently, intimacy presumes and develops trust, because it extends a particular privilege and responsibility in the very act of sharing: I am *given* privileged access to the Other's world in confidence.

5.2.2 Recognition of the Other *qua* Same

The assimilative attitude necessarily engages the Other in terms of an extension of the knowledge of the Same. It is a recognition of the Other as something-understood. To use Gadamer's language, it attends to the common ground realized in the "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*). However, the richness of Gadamer's account is that the fusion of horizons is *not* a simple identification of horizons, but a thoughtful mediation (*denkende Vermittlung*). While the frontiers of two horizons may overlap, which is to say that a certain degree of identification or what Gadamer calls "agreement" may occur, this identification can never even in principle be complete. When we agree, we agree *about something*, which is to say that there are definite limits to what has been agreed upon and therefore much that remains beyond the scope of *this* particular agreement. Since understanding (*Verstehen*) is appropriation (*Aneignung*), the process of understanding inevitably points beyond itself to what lies beyond the appropriation. From the vantage of the Same, our only available vantage, one intimates the alterity of the Other as that which lies beyond the appropriated content, but towards which the understanding intends: the

¹¹ Here I defer to Ricoeur's analysis of "narrative identity" in, among other places, *Oneself as Another*.

alterity of the Other. Consequently, the recognition of the Other *qua* Same does not in and of itself constitute an inauthentic relation to the Other, rather it is a necessary condition for the possibility of authentically confronting the irreducible alterity of the Other.

5.2.3 Representation and Humiliation

By the lights of Richard Rorty, *humiliation* is “forced redefinition.” In other words, to impose a representation upon the Other is a form of violence. It substitutes the particularity of this Other with a representation, which “stands in” for the Other. In *Solidarity, Contingency, and Irony*, Rorty develops this account explicitly in terms of self-image:

The redescribing ironist, by threatening one’s final vocabulary, and thus one’s ability to make sense of oneself in one’s own terms rather than hers, suggests that one’s self and one’s world are futile, obsolete, *powerless*. Redescription often humiliates (CIS 90).

For Rorty, only self-interpreting creatures can be humiliated, because only self-interpreting creatures can have their self-image negated. Contra Rorty, however, I suggest that substituting a representation for an irreducibly unique individual is a suppression of alterity, and therefore an act of humiliation regardless of whether or not the individual is self-interpreting. Fundamentally, it is not so much a corruption of the Other’s *self-image*, a concern reflecting Rorty’s linguistic bias, but the corruption of the *relationship* in which I and the Other stand. By diverting my attention away from the Other to the representation of the Other, I have already undermined the necessary conditions for realizing a fully moral relationship between us, because I have lost sight of the Other.

Moreover, this criticism is consistent with Rorty’s more interesting claim that solidarity is “created” rather than “discovered.” For Rorty, solidarity cannot be grounded in a shared metaphysical description, i.e., essence, but must be pragmatically realized through the

proper construction of relationships. In particular, Rorty stresses the moral significance of noticing the Other's vulnerability, of being attentive, and thereby fostering a fellowship of those who suffer. Rorty's mistake is to uncritically place those that fall under the description "language-user" at the centre of moral considerability. Thus while he rejects the possibility of finding an essential description capable of grounding solidarity, Rorty presumes an essential description as delimiting viable participants within the solidarity creating language-game. It is not clear to me that the production of solidarity can take place only within a *language-game*. Indeed, Māhāyana Buddhism has located itself within an orienting project of constructing relationships of solidarity amongst all beings. For the Buddhists, it is not a question of *linguistic* exchange, but the communication of ontological dependence and compassionate relationality.

5.3 False Empathy: "I know how you feel."

Only the crudest egoism asserts "I know what you are going through" and genuinely means it. Such an assertion is the affirmation of the Same at the expense of the Other. Most of us have suffered such a response to our distress, namely, the insensitivity of another who commandeers our revelation as a vehicle for self-indulgence and the opportunity to tell, rather than as a call to listen. It is not accidental that the claim "I know exactly what you are going through" often marks a turning point in a conversation; namely, the fulcrum on which Other-directed attention is abandoned for the egoistic reassertion of the Same. Sympathetic responsiveness is censored by the relating of a self-centred story about the history of the Same's own predicaments. The uniqueness of the Other's situation is thereby overwritten by the familiarity of the experiences of the Same.

To be sure, we often hear someone sympathetically respond “I know what you are going through” as a solidarity producing speech-act. In this case, however, it is *not* meant literally, but reflects a willingness to relate, to confirm, and to clarify the exigency of the situation. This exclamation is not *meant*, because it is still the Other’s predicament that is *intended*. Whereas the egoist uses this exclamation to shift attention away from the Other’s predicament, a friend voices this exclamation as way of focusing more intensely on the predicament of the Other through sharing and intimacy building. In Watsuji’s terminology, such an exclamation functions as way of furthering an already existing betweenness. The difference between the former and the latter versions of the exclamation is often marked by the latter’s readiness to listen and the former’s fervor to tell.

5.4 Altered Experience: Failure of Identification

Whereas the epistemological orientation towards the Other is centripetal, drawing the world into an egoism, the other-directedness of ethics is centrifugal, a being drawn-out beyond egocentrism. In this sense, the ethical relation is a mode of ecstasy, a standing outside of one’s narrow self, in which I abandon the primacy of my narcissism. Thus, the confrontation with alterity ends up radically altering our mode of orientation vis-à-vis the Other *from* the construction of knowing-relations to the construction of a moral-relationship. This “alteration” pivots on the failure of our knowledge-centered identification with the Other.

In our sincerest efforts at understanding the Other’s situation, we inevitably turn to an imaginative reconstruction of “what it must be like” to occupy the Other’s position, and therein we directly confront the difference of the Other. The recognition that the Other occupies a unique position in relation to the disclosure of this predicament requires that

the development of our understanding has never lost sight of the Other in the process. Moreover, the very effort bodied forth in *trying* to identify with the Other vividly announces my difference from the Other.

As I listen to my friend reveal the facts of the predicament, my understanding of the “objective conditions” develops in breadth and detail. Eventually the development of my understanding extends towards the “subjective effects” of this predicament, that is, the emotional upheaval my friend must be experiencing.¹² At this point, my reception of his description is supplemented by my efforts at trying to emotionally identify with his position. There evolves a movement from the external circumstances to the inwardness of his position as I begin to imaginatively fill in the details of what it must be like to be in his shoes. However a significant drama unfolds just on the verge of realizing the possibility of this identification with his position, namely, the reality of all of this belonging to him shatters the illusion of its ever belonging to me. Inevitably, I come up short. The elasticity of my intentional stretching can never quite reach its goal before it suddenly snaps back and recoils to its anchoring point. Indeed, the closer I seem to come to the edge of glimpsing the concrete throb of *his* pain, the more violently I wake to my simulation as the shadow of his reality. The felt contrast inherent in this awakening shatters the drive to identify, while simultaneously drawing me closer to his side and to his disposal. This waking frees me from the initial mesmerism of his pain and opens me up to the unique dignity of his suffering. The moments of this process are: I am moved by him, towards him, and then, for him.

¹² The of scare quotes around “objective conditions” and “subjective effects” is meant to mark the problematic nature of any hard separation between the objective and subjective poles given my commitment to a strongly externalist conception of mind.

The transition to imagination is a transition from third-person strategies of comprehension to a final attempt at “leaping into” the Other to grasp the situation from the inside. However, in this last ditch effort to leap towards the Other I am hurled to the outer limits of the self, coming face-to-face with the failure of my efforts at identification. Like Tanabe’s *zangedō*, my “thinking-afterward” in relation to the breakdown of self-power enacts a radical conversion, a “breaking through,” to the standpoint of Other-power as acting, witnessing, and having faith in the power of the Other. This failure, and the attending abandonment of the project of assimilation, marks a pivoting from an essentially epistemological to an essentially ethical orientation, since this failure is given as a double-sided experience: humility, on the near side, and the absolute alterity of the Other, on the far side. The limit of knowing as the limits of the Other’s relative alterity is also the beginning of ethics, namely, the surfacing of his absolute alterity.

5.4.1 Sincerity and Empathy

Knowledge is an essentially normative practice, because the implicit claim of any representation (regardless of whether it is a mental image, linguistic concept, proposition, mathematical formula) is that it purports to be *about something* and that this “aboutness” is adequate, correct, true, etc. In other words, knowledge is a particular kind of commitment that includes at least a minimal conception of what constitutes failure.

Michael Polanyi describes a tripartite structure at the heart of knowing: (1) the way we know, (2) impersonal constraints, and (3) a normative commitment about the relation between (1) and (2). In *The Tacit Dimension*, he writes:

Many writers have observed, since Dewey taught it at the close of the last century, that to some degree, we shape all knowledge in the way we know it. This appears to leave knowledge open to the whims of the observer. But the pursuit of science has shown us how even in the shaping of his own anticipations the knower is controlled by impersonal requirements. His acts are personal judgments exercised responsibly with a view to a reality with which he is seeking to establish contact. This holds for all seeking and finding of external truth [...] Any conclusion, be it given as a surmise or claimed as a certainty, *represents a commitment* of the person who arrives at it. No one can utter more than a responsible commitment of his own, and this completely fulfills the finding of the truth and the telling of it [Italics mine].¹³

His claim that the knower is “controlled by impersonal requirements” is Polanyi’s way of articulating his deflated brand of scientific realism by pointing to the ontological independence of the world. As such, a failure to be disciplined by such impersonal requirements marks a failure of responsibility. It would mark a movement from the dependence of commitment to the insulation of dogmatism.

However, there is a more Nietzschean consideration, which locates a further source of constraint. Like Polanyi, Nietzsche understands the will to truth as including an internal, self-regulating structure that normatively guides its operation. This normativity consists of a commitment to *get to the bottom (Grund) of things*, what Nietzsche calls “honesty” or “truthfulness.” On the one hand, Nietzsche’s view is consonant with Polanyi’s, because the will to truth is committed to *truth*. On the other, Nietzsche’s view transcends Polanyi’s because the will to truth *wills* only certain conceptions of truth (unlike Polanyi the “will to truth” as understood by Nietzsche makes a qualitative distinction between “surmises” and “certain” conclusions). The will to truth is only satisfied with certain kinds of unconditional truth-commitments: indubitable truth, a priori truth, absolute truth, certainty, etc. A fundamental aspect of the will to truth is that it aims at self-

¹³ Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*. New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1966, 77; hereafter indicated as “TD.”

transparency, and thus it seeks to fully justify and certify the content of its knowing by appropriating the grounds of its knowing. This “honesty” of the will to truth is, for Nietzsche, the source of its power, as well as the source of its inevitable unraveling, because it tries to separate itself from the possibility of failure, despite the fact that the possibility of failure (falsity, incorrectness, etc.) is a necessary condition for knowledge as a normative practice.

The will to truth wills absolute certainty, which it conceives as a firm and indubitable ground but, as Nietzsche emphasizes, existence is the condition for the possibility of the practice of giving and asking for reasons (justification). The consequence of this incompatibility between (1) the ultimate groundlessness of all knowledge (the impermanence of existence) and (2) the relentless drive for an unconditional ground (absolute permanence), defines the pathology of the will to truth. Flanked by two incompatible constraints, the will to truth subsists in a double bind. Since the honesty of the will to truth inevitably confronts an infinite regress as the reflection of its impossible desire, the ultimate inferential conclusion of the will to truth is nihilism (groundlessness). In this passage from the *Genealogy of Morals*, in which he begins by quoting himself from the *Gay Science* §357, Nietzsche stakes out this nihilistic trajectory in the two most influential manifestations of the will to truth, namely, Christianity and science:

“Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness taken more and more strictly, the confessional subtlety of the Christian conscience translated and sublimated into the scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price” [...] After Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another, it must end by drawing its *most striking inference*, its inference *against* itself; this will happen, however, when it poses the question “what is the meaning of all will to truth?” (*GM* III, §27).

Nishitani, moreover, succinctly expresses this insight as “the sincerity cultivated by Christianity reveals the falseness of Christianity itself” (*SoN* 180).

While Nietzsche's primary concern is the implicit nihilism at the heart of the will to truth, my interest concerns the fact that the will to truth undoes itself precisely because of its constitutive normative commitment. That is, if the current equilibrium of knowing is revealed to be inadequate such that its reasons are no longer sufficient, then the will to truth must reconfigure its knowing. The will to truth demarcates an irreducible normative commitment to sincerity with respect to knowing, precisely because the will to truth can tolerate nothing short of complete truth. In this sense, then, the sincerity of the will to truth describes the intersection of epistemic and moral virtue. Nietzsche captures this tenuous coincidence in an exquisitely provocative statement: "*How far the moral sphere extends—As soon as we see a new image, we immediately construct it with the aid of all our previous experiences, depending on the degree of our honesty and justice. All experiences are moral experiences, even in the realm of sense perception*" (*Gay Science* §114). In this passage, Nietzsche identifies a fundamental friction between "recognition" (knowledge) as a Platonic simplification of experience aspiring to universality, and "honesty" (morality) as insisting on the falsification introduced in the construction of experience.¹⁴

In contemporary discussions, thinkers such as Robert Brandom and John Haugeland have pursued the question of the normativity of intentionality (including concepts, beliefs, theories, etc) in terms of the conceivability of being mistaken:

The objectivity of conceptual norms requires that any attitude of taking, treating, or assessing as correct an application of a concept in forming a belief or making a claim be coherently conceivable as mistaken, because of how things are with the objects the belief or claim is about.¹⁵

¹⁴ Nishitani writes, "The power of this kind of self-reflectiveness or self-criticism [truthfulness and honesty], which comes refracted from the far side of the self, is the 'honesty' that tries its utmost not to deceive itself or others" (SoN 83).

¹⁵ Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 63.

For Brandom, endorsing any representation gives it a grip on us precisely because we can be wrong in our endorsement. Moreover, on his view, there are real rational “commitments” and “entitlements” reflecting the consequential relations pragmatically entailed in our making a claim: “we can understand making a claim as taking up a particular sort of normative stance toward an inferentially articulated content. It is endorsing it, taking responsibility for it, committing oneself to it.”¹⁶ In a similar vein, Haugeland sees fallibility as normatively governing our epistemic and ontological relations to the world: “In other words, the fallibility of intentionality reveals that it is not merely factual, but also a *normative* relation” (HT 128). This normativity then concerns an ongoing practical and theoretical evaluation of the appropriateness of a given representation or theory, “That in terms of which a representation is significant is that which it purports to represent—its object—and it is evaluated according to whether it represents that object correctly or accurately” (HT 233).

For my purposes, it is simply worth noting that the indefeasible normativity of our knowledge practices is dependent on the very possibility of humility and sincerity. By recognizing the intertwining of knowledge practices and normativity, it becomes clear that no simple opposition between epistemology and ethics can be the case. To the contrary, this analysis resists the identification or the separation of epistemology and ethics, but reveals the inherent complexity of their intersection—a complexity that will be considered in Chapter 6.

¹⁶ Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, 192.

5.4.2 Humility: An Ethical Posture

The failure to comprehend the Other brings about the deflation of narcissism, and the emergence of humility. It transfigures our mode of being. Indeed, "humility" describes a comportment that extends the conceivability that *one* can be wrong to the preparedness that *I* may be wrong. Obviously, the failure of identification and the concomitant realization of the fundamental difference between my position and the position of Others vis-à-vis any given set of circumstances is the direct revelation of the limits of my powers of knowing. This limitation is not merely felt as one of degree, namely that I cannot exhaust every detail, but more importantly one of kind, namely that there are knowing relations in the world that I simply cannot occupy, i.e., the unique and concrete position of the Other in relation to his tragedy.

The lesson of these limitations is not that I should abandon the effort of understanding, but that I must revise my very conception of understanding such that it becomes irreducibly hermeneutical, and thereby self-consciously *honest*. Rorty connects hermeneutical understanding with epistemic honesty: "We must be hermeneutical where we can not understand what is happening but are honest enough to admit it, rather than be blatantly 'Whiggish' about it" (*MoN* 321). In other words, the will to truth must undergo a transformation. Heidegger's emphasis on truth as "disclosure" (i.e., hermeneutical), over truth as "assertion" (i.e., apophantical), marks just such a transformation. By focusing on truth as an event of uncovering, it becomes more difficult to lose sight of revealing *and* concealing as correlative aspects of truth. Indeed, the beauty of Heidegger's distinction between truth-event and propositional-truth is that the distinction itself is characterized in terms of the hermeneutical "as": truth as "disclosure" vs. truth as "apophantical").

5.4.3 Recognition of the Other *qua* Other

Ethics seizes us like vertigo when the will to truth confronts the abyss of Otherness. On the near side, I *understand* the relative alterity of the Other, which is to say the Other *qua* Same, while on the horizontal limits of this near side I *intimate* the absolute alterity of the Other, which is to say the Other *qua* Other. My understanding of relative alterity provides the vantage point from which I intimate the horizontal excess of the Other. The intimation of the irreducible alterity of the Other is experienced through the encounter with my own humility.

To be sure, I cannot experience the alterity of the Other in the sense of intending a content, rather I am struck by the Other's alterity in much the same way a chained dog discovers the limits of his territory as the abrupt end of his forward bounding. While the dog sees beyond the limits of his chain, even this reaching beyond gradually shades into indeterminacy. Such horizontal limits are inassimilable, but are not, therefore, nothing. While my powers of appropriation may not be able to get any definite purchase on the Other's alterity *qua* positive content, I intimate his Otherness nonetheless.

5.4.4 Autonomy and Alterity

One's awakening to epistemological failure at identification is the lived authentication of the Other's difference, which can be construed in terms of her *autonomy*. This direct confrontation with autonomy is nothing more than the felt concreteness of irreducible alterity and the force of the Other's difference. It is nothing less than our recognition of the Other's place within the domain of moral considerables. However, the difference that is the experience of the Other's autonomy is of a fundamentally different order than the

difference of an object as that which "stands against."¹⁷ While neither difference is positively given as contentful experience, the difference-of-objects undergirds those modes of orientation proper to knowledge-making projects (intentionality), while the difference-of-autonomy undergirds those modes of orientation proper to solidarity-making projects (intimacy).

The very movement of the imaginative leaps at the limits of our attempt to identify with the Other effects the vanishing of the Other from the order of objects. The transition into the leap is already the transition away from an object-centered orientation, which initiates the withdrawal of the Other *qua* relative alterity. Thus, the leap towards the Other is a leap beyond the horizon of objects and the discovery of the Other within the horizon of the self and within my field of intimacy. The "within-ness" of the Other and the "intimacy" shared is fundamentally different from assimilation, which is always a knowledge-relation and therefore a keeping-at-a-distance of the known (*Gegenstand*) by keeping the known in the grip (*Begriff*) of the Same. The knowledge-relation is a mode of moral neutralization. In contrast, the intimacy of the moral relation is a primordial co-belongingness, co-vulnerability, and com-passion existing beyond the estrangement of subject-object opposition.¹⁸ Thus, I give myself over to a solidarity with an autonomous Other (a moral

¹⁷ My use of object here is not synonymous with "a thing," and therefore does not denote that which opposes "persons," but that which opposes a "subject." It is a phenomenological, rather than a metaphysical claim.

¹⁸ This phenomenological description can be viewed as the process by which gains Other gains sanctuary, that is, a place within my field of intimates. A more Nietzschean reading would then view the transformation of this moral consciousness as the invoking of a "tribal" drive to guard "one of ours" against the world, regardless of the material and practical conditions that normally govern in-group and out-group membership (moral considerability as conventionally governed by "metaphysical descriptions"). The kind of investment involved in understanding ultimately trumps the conventional "tribal" boundaries in order to *take this Other as "one of ours."* In other words, this "taking as" can be arbitrary, which is to say it reflects conventional ascriptions structuring groups, or it can be non-arbitrary and reflect the intimacy constituted through my investment in this

considerable) with whom I stand shoulder-to-shoulder, that is, an Other that is in no way reducible to knowledge and my egoism.

5.4.5 Truthfulness and Autonomy

Our freedom is bound up with truthfulness in the sense that the efficacy of our spontaneity depends on gaining a solid grip on how the world is. In other words, confusion undermines our basic capacity to exercise our freedom. Therefore, the normative *force* of truth is tied directly to its efficacy. Indeed, Haugeland defines intelligence “as the ability to deal reliably with more than the present and the manifest” (HT 230). On his view, human intelligence “abides in the meaningful—which, far from being restricted to representations, extends to the entire human world. Mind, therefore, is not incidentally but *intimately* embodied and *intimately* embedded in its world” (HT 237).

However, safeguarding our grip on the world (autonomy) requires reigning in the drive for closure belonging to the will to truth. In other words, advances in our grip on the world driven by the will to truth require being *open* to revising our current grip on the world, which is to say the *deferral* of the will to truth (*sincerity*). Autonomy and *sincerity*, therefore, constitute a complex weave of tensions at the very heart of the practice of truth-seeking and truth-making.

When he writes in the third part of the *Genealogy of Morals*, “The will to truth requires a critique—let us thus define our own task—the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*” (III §24), Nietzsche is challenging the interpretation of truth as an absolute value unto itself. The deep kinship between truth and efficacy promotes the mistaken belief in the intrinsic value of truth, thereby leading philosopher’s to

unique Other. Simply put, this is why constructive forms of contact with an Other eventually disrupt moral exclusionism e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, anthropocentrism, etc.

speak of "truth," rather than speaking of "true-for," that is, true-for whom and true-for what purpose. What this means for the Same is that its own autonomy depends on a sincere relation vis-à-vis the Other. This is to claim that the Same cannot remain willfully deluded about the Other without at the same time compromising its grip on the world. Even from the standpoint of the crudest egoism, the Same is compelled by that very egoism to sincerely attend to alterity on pain of losing its efficacy in the world. Once again, the normativity of knowing surfaces and begins to reveal its ethical implications. To be sure, this normativity tends to effect transformations at the societal level, rather than at the level of the individual. The reason is that the range of activities pursued by the individual is narrower than the range of activities pursued by a larger community, which means that the parochialism of an individual often has less of an impact on her immediate efficacy than it does for a society that is constantly confronting new challenges.

5.5 Submission and Obligation: "Is there anything I can do?"

To ask, "Is there anything I can do?" reflects the transition from the activity of understanding (i.e., self-power) to the patience of listening (i.e., Other-power). As Ricoeur rightly points out, the receptivity of listening already expresses our fundamental dependence on Others:

Listening excludes founding oneself. The movement toward listening requires, therefore, a second letting go, the abandoning of a more subtle and more tenacious pretension than that of onto-theological knowledge. It requires giving up [*dessaisissement*] the human self in its will to mastery, sufficiency, and autonomy.¹⁹

This question, which has been preceded by the phenomenological recognition of the Other as morally considerable, explicitly places me at the disposal of the Other. From the

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*. Ed. Mark I. Wallace. Trans. David Pellauer. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, 224

confrontation of my incapacity to comprehend the Other's suffering, I submit myself to sharing in the burden of coping with his predicament. I come to recognize my obligation to the Other, and thereby our solidarity as vulnerable beings. While there is always a point at which our suffering must remain distinctly personal and forever alien to the Other, this does not entail that we must remain estranged in our coping with suffering. Thus, out of the direct confrontation with the alterity of the Other, we are brought towards solidarity and enter into a moral project as "co-sufferers." In the "Introduction" to *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty endorses such a project of a post-metaphysical liberal community:

It [human solidarity] is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and the humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people. Such increased sensitivity makes it more difficult to marginalize people different from ourselves by thinking, "They do not feel it as we would," or "There must always be suffering, so why not let them suffer?" (CIS xvi).

In the end, then, compassion is not an epistemological question of access to the Other's mental state, but a question of moral-political entrance into a shared project of alleviating suffering (i.e., the Bodhisattva ideal).

If we return to consider Seyla Benhabib's distinction between the "generalized" and the "concrete" Other, we can understand the dynamics of our phenomenological description as a movement from an abstract and generalized Other to the realization of *this* concrete and unique Other. As Benhabib notes, the generalized Other is the Other that enjoys the legal rights of being a "person." Therefore, our moral obligation towards the generalized Other is primarily understood in terms of "negative" rights, which is to say a moral obligation *not to interfere* with the Other. This moral orientation is essentially a

relationship of estrangement and alienation, of space and distance, rather than one of community and solidarity. In his essay "Love and Justice," Ricoeur criticizes this model of social interaction: "Here society is seen, in effect, as the space of confrontation between rivals" (FS 323). The model of the generalized Other presumes a conception of community as antagonistic and a conception of the individual as self-sufficient, self-reliant, and independent. Hence, it simply ignores the fundamental dimension of our shared vulnerability.

From a Buddhist perspective, this conception of the individual as "not suffering" represents a self-deceptive masking of our basic existential condition (*dukkha*). As such, this moral orientation toward each Other regulates everydayness in terms of our *freedom from* the Other, who threatens my spontaneity rather than as forming the basis of my *freedom to*. In other words, it represents a systematic blindness to the Others that allow for my freedom, namely, those whose labour is invisible e.g., women's labour that frees men for the self-deceptive project of *sui generis* independence.

Our moral obligation to the concrete Other is of a different kind altogether. In relation to the concrete Other, we take on "positive" responsibilities that involve interaction, sacrifice, and intimacy. We engage in shared projects that are not predicated on mutual non-interference. Instead, we *care about*, *care for* and *care with* the Other. Negative rights presume a model in which our moral "relation" to the Other involves averting my eyes and stepping aside for the Other. Indeed, at the centre of Ricoeur's concern about identifying ethics with "justice" is that, at best, it offers an anemic moral vision: "the highest point the ideal of justice can envision is that of a society in which the feeling of mutual dependence—even of mutual indebtedness—remains subordinate to the idea of mutual disinterest" (FS 323). In stark contrast, our *relationship* with a concrete Other

involves a face-to-face relation, a handshake, and a considered word. Such concrete relations are rooted in a listening to the Other, which is nothing less than the construction of solidarity and community: "each is entitled to expect and to assume from the other forms of behavior through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as a concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents and capacities."²⁰

To my mind, our moral commitment to the concept of the generalized Other represents an abstraction from, and formal extension of, the living familiarity of our phenomenological experience of concrete Others. In other words, the presumptive dignity of the generalized Other is grounded in the counterfactual commitment: If I were to engage this Other, then I would inevitably confront the concreteness of her absolute alterity. This counterfactual, however, is firmly rooted in the concreteness of the lifeworld, wherein we regularly and vividly experience a direct correlation between non-reductive modes of engagement with the Other and the emergent sense of her irreducible uniqueness and alterity.

²⁰ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1992, 159; hereafter indicated to as "SS."

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: An About Face

What is really "in" experience extends much further than that which at any time is *known*. From the standpoint of knowledge, objects must be distinct; their traits must be explicit; the vague and unrevealed is a limitation. Hence whenever the habit of identifying reality with the object of knowledge as such prevails, the obscure and vague are explained away. It is important for philosophic theory to be aware that the distinct and evident are prized and why they are. But is equally important to note that the dark and twilight abound. For in any object of primary experience there are always potentialities which are not explicit; any object that is overt is charged with possible consequences that are hidden; the most overt act has factors which are not explicit. Strain thought as far as we may and not all consequences can be foreseen or made an express or known part of reflection and decision.¹

6.1 Alterity: The Other-Side of Knowing

The above passage from John Dewey will serve as something of a guide for this chapter. Dewey offers a salient reminder that there is always an other-side to our knowing. This other-side, however, does not designate the real in contrast to mere appearance, it is not a metaphysical Other as Levinas would have it, but a returning of attention to the ranging of the real beyond our knowing. It is a regulative principle of realism in that it resists the reduction of the real to knowledge, and a regulative principle of ethics in that it resists the reduction of Otherness to the principle of identity.

The double-nature of this regulative function reveals the conceptual relationship between alterity and the real. To abandon the concept of alterity is to abandon the possibility of our being wrong about the world, and to abandon this possibility is to forgo the normative status of knowledge, which depends on the conceivability of error. Thus,

¹ John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co, 1925, 21; hereafter indicated as "EN."

despite a certain tension between alterity and the will to truth, alterity serves as the enabling background from which the will to truth gathers its claim to power. Conversely, alterity relies on understanding as the foregrounded presence from which the depth of the Other is intimated. The work of this concluding chapter will be to articulate the proper relation between epistemology and alterity. The clarification of this relation will also reveal significant implications with respect to *moral considerability* and *the morality of our knowledge practices*.

Roughly stated, this investigation will show that moral considerability is predicated on the experience of autonomy *qua* absolute alterity, which is to say that the encounter with the Otherness of the Other initiates our *deference* for the integrity of the Other as not reducible to my projects as well as our *appreciation* for the intimacy of our relationship with the Other as an intrinsic locus of value. Here, it is important to note that deference and appreciation refer to *self-imposed* and *self-binding* moral attitudes or commitments at the level of the first-person perspective, which is to say that deference and appreciation are not externally coerced stances vis-à-vis the Other, but *compelling* stances taken in light of my experience of the Other.² In short, I *awaken* to the moral considerability of the Other such that my relation towards the Other is radically *altered*.³

² An analogous example would be love. I am not forced to love the Other, even though there is a sense in which the Other is the *source* of my love and, secondly, that my *self* is not the *cause* of my love.

³ This notion of “awaking to” the alterity of the Other is an attempt to weave together aspects of awakening *qua* enlightenment, especially as articulated in Tanabe’s metanoetics (§4.4), that is, as an authentication of the Same’s dependency on Other-power, in addition to Levinas’s ethical conception of a wakefulness beyond lucidity as discussed in §5.1.1. More specifically, the Japanese perspective contributes the notion of our awakening to an already existing relational dependence that has been heretofore concealed by the assertive egoism of the Same, while Levinas’s notion of awakening as *vigilance* speaks directly to the ethical modification of the Same’s orientation in view of the Other. The problem with Levinas’s theological-mystical description of a pseudo-beatific vision of the Other is that it fails to fully account for the specifically *ethical* reaction of the Same to the surplus of the Other that cannot be contained by intentionality (i.e., reduced to intentional

This encounter with alterity, however, requires that I *accommodate* the Other, which is to realize that the Otherness of the Other can only be *intimated* against the background of certain forms of interaction. Since alterity is not an essential property of the Other, but a property of my relationship with the Other, different modes of relation allow for differing intimations of alterity. For example, the use of racist, sexist and other such epithets “objectify” the Other, thereby licensing a corresponding treatment of the Other *qua* thing. This type of interaction works to locate the Other beyond the domain of moral considerability by substituting a mere concept for the concrete presence of the Other. Whereas the Other as concrete presence is necessarily indefinite, entailing various horizons of alterity, the Other as conceptual presence is completely severed from alterity and thus given as sheer availability. It is precisely this dis-location of the Other from its horizons of alterity that allows the racist, sexist, etc., to view the Other as a relative Other, a *mere* “not-I,” lacking moral considerability. To put it differently, the violence of the racist is, in the strictest sense, never directed towards the individual, although the individual is forced to suffer the violence, rather it takes aim at a closed concept disconnected from the real. The closure of the concept resists any revelation of individuality that would contravene its fixed content, and thereby challenge the concept’s implicit justification for violence.⁴ The façade of the concept masks the face of the Other by disengaging from alterity.

content). There is nothing in the encounter with an uncontainable *surplus* as such that necessarily *compromises* the power of the Same, whose violence could simply eliminate what cannot be contained; however, the realization of its inextricable dependence on the Other radically compromises the power of the Same, which discovers that it must now compromise and accommodate the Other.

⁴ This inconceivability of being shown to be wrong about the Other is precisely why such “-isms” represent radical forms of ignorance.

In contrast to the hurling of racial epithets, a conversation between strangers is a wandering across horizons of alterity that are opened-up within the space of the dialogue. In the process of this wandering, each stranger becomes increasingly individualized or "fleshed out" before the Other. The exchange of personal names at the opening of such conversations signifies a rejection of the possibility of substituting a mere concept for the Other.⁵ While the fixed content of a racial epithet insulates the Same against the real, the contentlessness of the Other's name initiates a directedness towards the real, which is to say that a proper name is never a mere concept but a referral to a field of creative interaction and discovery.

Differing ways of approaching the Other signal qualitatively different experiences of alterity, and therefore normative distinctions with respect to these modes of engagement, namely, some modes of interaction are morally superior to others not because they are commensurate with the institutionalized moral status of the Other, which is a secondary question of rights and responsibilities, but because these interactions constitute the very basis of one's recognition of the Other *qua* Other, which is the primary question of moral considerability. Modes of disclosure governing entrance into the domain of moral considerables are revelatory interactions, while practical dealings within the established domain of moral considerables are regulative interactions. Regulative interactions do not confront the question of moral considerability, but presume that the question is already settled. In so doing, regulative interactions are problem-oriented rather than Other-directed, and thereby implicitly reinforce the presumed boundaries of considerables.

⁵ To be sure, there are interesting correlations between the individualizing function of a proper name and corresponding affective responses. For example, in many societies with high-rates of infant mortality, children are often not named until they have survived beyond the most critical period.

Revelatory interactions are radically Other-directed and constitute an awakening to the Other as morally considerable. This awakening may be consonant with or transgressive of putative boundaries.⁶

From the standpoint of an ethics of alterity, however, this distinction marks an explanatory difference in analytical moments. Within an ethics of alterity, regulative interactions would be virtuous to the extent that such interactions support the revelation of the Other as morally considerable, while vicious regulative interactions are those that suppress the disclosure of the Other as morally considerable. Note that such an ethics is radically originary in the sense that it is rooted in an incessant awakening to the concrete alterity of Others. It is to live in a state of *vigilance*. Consequently, an ethics of alterity requires an immense investment at the level of our direct engagement with individual Others, since it never presumes the domain of moral considerables to be a fixed quantity. Rather than a stable metaphysical or logical sortal for entities, an ethics of alterity experiences the domain as *opened up* by the Other. It is only in the face of a unique Other that I awaken to the living sense of what it means for something to be morally considerable, and therefore the living sense of what it means to contentedly revise or defer my projects in view of the Other's interests. In other words, it is not a matter of acting in

⁶ This picture is further complicated by the fact that there may be real differences in what societal institutions stipulate as the domain of moral considerables and what a particular individual actually takes to be morally considerable. An individual's domain of moral considerables may be narrower or wider than what is recognized by the institutions of the day. Secondly, it is complicated by the fact that it is not simply a matter of being inside or outside the domain of moral considerability, but a question about which forms of interactions allow the Other to be disclosed most robustly in his or her Otherness. Others are not simply morally considerable or not, but show up at various levels of intensity, hence the desire of "care ethics" to account for one's family as standing-out on the field of moral considerables more intensely than anything else. While one might contend that this fact is simply due to a moral parochialism rooted in the logic of identity, it is a consequence of experiencing a more robust alterity due to the intimate relationships characteristic of a family. If it were simply a consequence of the logic of identity, then one's self and not one's family would take moral priority over everything else. This point will be considered in greater depth below.

accord with moral maxims or principles, but of living in accord with the Other—it is in this that the significance of an ethical life consists.

In order to further clarify the sense in which there are normative differences in how one accommodates the Other, let me conclude this section by presenting the point as a counterfactual: if I were to accommodate the Other vis-à-vis a mode of interaction allowing for a more profound revelation of alterity and thereby a more profound revelation of the Other's autonomy, then the experience of that autonomy would constitute the moral basis for my deference, appreciation, and accommodation of the Other. Hence, I am obligated to accommodate the Other in a manner that maximizes the revelation (i.e., intimation) of the Other's alterity. In simpler terms, a greater investment in the Other often reveals that the Other was, in fact, always worthy of just such an investment.⁷ Moreover, a weaker form of epistemological normativity can also be expressed as a counterfactual: if I were to utterly refuse to accommodate the Other such that my mode of interaction eliminates the alterity of the Other, then I would also eliminate the possibility of revealing error and thereby the condition for the possibility of knowledge. The normativity of the epistemological formulation is clearly weaker, because it sets a minimal constraint on interaction, namely, not to reduce alterity to zero, while the normativity of the moral

⁷ Note the weighty ethical implications of this everyday experience. In an initial encounter with the Other, I may be conflicted between a desire to simply dismiss him on the basis of an initial impression or I can choose to sincerely invest myself in him. If I were to choose the latter course and come to recognize a profound value in this person, then would my initial hesitancy to invest in this person not be seen as a moral failing—a regretful reflection of my own egotism. Or, worse still, I choose the first course of action only to fully awaken to his "value" at a later time. Does the consequent remorse concerning the treatment of this Other not provide a significant moral lesson? Am I excused this dismissal because I had not yet seen the Other's "value?" What about more institutionalized failures to recognize the alterity of Others? Are the imperial powers of the West excused for their colonialization and enslavement of peoples whom we had not yet recognized as worthy of moral consideration? Rather, moral culpability begins in the initial unwillingness to interact with Others in a manner that allows their moral considerability to come into view. In short, blindness to the moral considerability (alterity) of the Other can never excuse violence against the Other.

formulation is quite strong, because it sets a maximal constraint on interaction. However, since ethics represents a meta-discipline of our practices, including our knowledge practices, the normative force of the ethical formulation carries over into the normative force of the epistemological formulation.

6.2 The Background of the Face

While the increasing emphasis on the “face” of the Other in postmodern discourse undoubtedly reflects the fact that it marks the focal point in our interactions with alterity, and as such has become phenomenologically bound up with our recognition of the Other’s moral considerability, it is not the case that the Other’s considerability resides in the face *per se*. It is more accurate to say that the face *symbolizes* this considerability. The point here is not a trivial one that would amount to clarifying the obvious fact that considerability is not causally linked to the physical face, but that “faciality” is not primarily physicality at all, but a special kind of constituted sense.⁸

⁸ To be sure, many have argued that the face as a physical structure is the source of moral considerability, because it is the corporeal focal point of linguistic and emotional expression. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty argues precisely along these lines: “Babies and the more attractive sorts of animal are credited with ‘having feelings’ [...] This is to be explained on the basis of that sort of community feeling which unites us with anything humanoid. To be humanoid is to have a human face, and the most important part of that face is a mouth which we can imagine uttering sentences in synchrony with appropriate expressions of the face as a whole” (PMN 189), and “things with roughly human faces which look as if they might someday be conversational partners are usually credited with ‘feelings’” (PMN 190). Again, Rorty reveals his linguistic reductionism and, in the process, overstates his point. Language-use simply does not play as significant a role in the attribution of feelings, community, or moral considerability as Rorty would like to think. One only needs to examine the history of racial discourse in Europe and the Americas in order to understand that almost anything could be attributed to non-whites in spite of the undisputed recognition of enslaved peoples as “speakers.” While Rorty’s point that language-use is normally sufficient for the attribution of feeling is well-taken, it is certainly not a necessary condition. To restrict the discussion to language-use as shaping our perception of Others is to ignore, for example, the role of the Other in the economic interests of the dominant community. One cannot understand the resistance to abolition in the United States, the exploitation of immigrant workers, the oppression of women and the suffering of cattle without understanding how the economic interests of agricultural, sex, cosmetic, medical, fashion, and food industries are served by systematically discounting the feelings of these Others. In general, Rorty is conflating a

My basic point is that the face is a deictic provocation. Its compelling force as morally motivating depends on the context from which the face emerges. The language of "faciality" serves as a way of referring to this horizon of significance that is drawn together in the presence of the face. In "Particularity and Principle: The Structure of Moral Knowledge," Jay Garfield discusses the relationship between deictic and apodeictic discourse:

This Heideggerean distinction [deictic/apodeictic] provides us with another way of seeing the relation between particularist and universalist understandings of moral knowledge. The particularist emphasizes the deictic side of moral discourse, while the universalist emphasizes its apodeictic side. To be sure, moral discourse, can be carried out at both levels. But like all fundamental discourses about value, the deictic level provides the background presupposed by the apodeictic.⁹

The analysis of the practical, theoretical, and affective horizons structuring faciality in the subsequent sections (§6.3.1-§6.3.3) is an attempt to indicate the deictic background of faciality on which the compelling presence of any particular face gets its traction. The structural relationship between face and faciality is not one of two distinct *discursive* levels, but a circular intersecting (i.e., hermeneutic) *experience* in which the concrete particularity of existential commitments and past experience inform the contemporary experience of particular faces.¹⁰

number of complex issues and thereby grossly oversimplifying his analysis. For example, while it is the case that "attractive sorts of animals" are more readily credited with feeling, it is too simplistic to claim that attractiveness is directly correlated to being more humanoid. Indeed, even Rorty's claim that the "mouth" is the most important part of the face is questionable at best, especially in light of the significance that the "eyes" play in revealing sentience.

⁹ From Jay Garfield's article, "Particularity and Principle: The Structure of Moral Knowledge," which appears in Brad Hooker & Margaret Olivia Little, eds. *Moral Particularism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, 202; hereafter indicated as "MP."

¹⁰ While it may seem strange to include the "theoretical horizon" as part of deictic background of faciality, I am not addressing the *internal* apodeictic discourses of theoretical disciplines, but the deictic role that particular theoretical commitments play with respect to the sense of face.

Throughout this study, I have argued against the Levinasian interpretation of the face as a metaphysical, supernatural, or quasi-theological phenomenon, that is, as a radically transcendent “anti-phenomenon” beyond the category of sense—a conception of the face as *contextless*. Secondly, I have argued that the face is what we perceive: it is the presence of the Other, but an illusory presence drawing our attention to the Other as absence. And, thirdly, I have argued against the face as purely an anthropocentric concept; hence, it is quite clear that animals, environments, and even things can have a face.

While it is easy to appreciate Levinas’s motivations for focusing on radical transcendence as a means of ensuring that the Other is not dependent on the imposition of meaning by the Same, our long history of violence reveals that the face of the Other is not sufficient in and of itself to magically awaken the moral sentiments of an entrenched egoism. Simply put, our practical and theoretical commitments too often make us blind to the face of the Other. However, the emphasis on the normativity of intentionality, representation, and knowledge (i.e., the will to truth) is intended as a middle-path between Levinas’s claim that the face of the Other transcends sense and the opposing claim that the Same arbitrarily determines the sense of the Other.¹¹ The normativity of the will to truth entails that the Same cannot simply impose whatever sense it wants on the Other without simultaneously compromising its grip on the Other. This is different from claiming that the

¹¹ While one could suggest that the notion of “co-founding” supplies a middle-path between these extremes of “unfounded” and “one-sidedly founded,” it is not clear to me that co-founding can do the requisite theoretical work. The normative dimension of co-founding would need to reside in the good will and diligence of the individual participants, rather than in the structure of co-founding itself. By focusing on the normativity of the will to truth, rather than on the individual, one can make clear how the interests of the Same and the Other ultimately coincide in truthfulness. Moreover, while the Same’s interests stem from the desire for efficacy, power, and control, the growing accommodation of the Other for the sake of truth leads to the intimation of the Other’s alterity and the fundamental alteration of the relationship between Same and Other as antagonism gives way to intimacy and solidarity.

Same *qua* ego is normatively disciplined in its understanding of the Other by being situated within an intersubjective sense of the Other, which could still amount to a one-sided founding of the Other at the macro-level rather than at the micro-level of the individual. To be sure, while an intersubjective perspective tends to be less arbitrary than an isolated perspective, societies can be just as wrong (Same *qua* ideology). Hence, it is vital that the Other plays a definitive role in the construction of its sense, which means that the reality of the Other is the ultimate measure of the adequacy of its sense. And to the extent that the power of knowledge, its efficacy, resides in its being *truly about* the real, the will to truth can never relinquish its commitment to truthfulness for the sake of its desire for closure. The will to truth must strive for richer revelations of the Other (truth as “disclosure”) and more adequate representations of the Other (truth as “correctness”). Thus, on the basis of its own interests, the Same cannot maintain arbitrary impositions of sense upon the Other, but must eventually open itself to the truth of the face of the Other.

Admittedly, this normativity in relation to the will to truth is seen most dramatically at the level of tradition, wherein the Same is more extended temporally and more diverse in terms of its projects. This temporal extension and diversity of projects provides a wider opportunity for being shown to be wrong and a greater demand for the preservation of efficacy in relation to the real. To put it differently, given the brevity and narrowness of an individual life, it is more likely that the limited experience and projects of the Same *qua* ego could tolerate being seriously deluded about the Other in a way that society or tradition could not, e.g., racists continue to exist despite substantive changes in the understanding of the tradition. The good news, however, is that the macro-level (tradition, society, and institutions) exerts additional normative constraints on the individual to conform to the sense of the Other that has been corrected in terms of the tradition’s wider

experience, e.g., civil society views racism as a form of ignorance and as socially unacceptable, while involvement, investment, and intersubjectivity at the micro-level exerts additional constraints (epistemological, affective, practical, aesthetic etc.) on the macro-level.¹²

For Levinas, the absence of the Other is characterized as an infinity and a transcendence reflecting the infinity and transcendence of the Divine. From a naturalistic perspective, the fact that the Other is never wholly reducible to presence is not a magical aspect of the Other, but a consequence of the Other's complexity and our finitude. This finitude, however, is not reducible to our temporal finitude as mortal creatures, but concerns the finitude of our situation, broadly construed, which is to say our situation in space, in history, in our bodies, in a specific cultural tradition, etc. While we can transcend our situation through understanding, we can never fully transcend ourselves.¹³ To be more exact, it is not so much that we transcend our situation, but that we extend ourselves by expanding our situation since we can never cease occupying our "here," even if we can conceive of what it would mean to be "there." Thus, unlike a metaphysical interpretation of the face, wherein the face stands outside of nature and is wholly/holy

¹² Significant changes in the understanding of the Other is a consequence of a complex interaction across macro- and micro-levels, since institutions, groups, and individuals possess differing modes of openness to the Other and differing constraints on the nature of that openness. For example, there is a real sense in which institutions respond to the Other, which is to say that institutions are not ontologically reducible to the individuals constituting them, and yet institutions clearly lack the same kind of emotional, bodily, and experiential openness informing individual comportment towards Others.

¹³ Again, John Dewey provides a helpful explication of the irreducible aspect of the non-cognitive behind the cognitive and its relation to temporality: "It is not denied that any experienced subject-matter whatever may *become* an object of reflection and cognitive inspection. But the emphasis is upon 'become'; the cognitive never *is* all inclusive: that is, when the material of a prior non-cognitive experience is the object of knowledge, it and the act of knowing are themselves included within a new and wider non-cognitive experience—and *this* situation can never be transcended. It is only when the temporal character of experienced things is forgotten that the idea of the total 'transcendence' of knowledge is asserted" (*EN 23*, Footnote).

beyond relation, situatedness provides the departure point for our relating to the face of the Other.

The face is a phenomenon with a constituted sense, it is imbued with meaning, and therefore as a face is already pre-given and pre-interpreted. It is precisely due to such pre-giveness that one can recognize *this* 'face' as a "face." Hence, the singular face appears against a background of faciality, which represents the primitive interpretive background against which we confront the particular face of a particular Other. Faciality, therefore, refers to the world-horizon as specifically bearing on the significance of the face.¹⁴

At bottom, a complete analysis of faciality would require a systematic analysis of the lifeworld itself, because our semantic strains of faciality can be traced across a variety of discursive fields. But for the sake of simplifying the presentation, the discussion will be limited to three horizons of the lifeworld—the practical, theoretical, and affective horizons—that play an obvious role in constituting the holistic background of faciality against which we confront the sense of the face. The following analyses are solely

¹⁴ Husserl makes a distinction between the *internal horizon* of an object and the *external horizon* of an object as a means for describing the difference between the referential (i.e., horizontal) function of "the systematic multiplicity of all possible perceptual exhibitings belonging to it harmoniously" (i.e., internal horizon) and the referential function of an object's "external horizon" as "a thing within a *field of things*" (*Crisis* 162). For Husserl, then, perceptual experience is thoroughly structured by nested structures of reference: profile (*Abschattung*) to internal horizon to external horizon to world-horizon. Thus, while Husserl is inclined to presuppose the discreteness of objects in perception *qua* explicit thematization (Heidegger's *Vorhandenheit*) and therefore the discreteness of these nested horizons, Heidegger's introduction of *Zuhandenheit* engages the world in terms of the smooth horizontal shading that defines being-in-the-world. Since this analysis is motivated by moral concerns instead of epistemological concerns, it assumes the smooth horizontal shading of pre-theoretical experience, wherein we encounter phenomena primarily in the form of preontological meaning rather than in the detached stance of observation. Husserl's later conception of the lifeworld, i.e., world-horizon, in the *Crisis* is, at least in the natural attitude, given as a smooth shading (i.e., holistically). Joseph Kockelmans explains: "None of the beings appears in isolation; each refers to a certain framework into which it is inserted and manifests itself within an all-encompassing and ever extended horizon: the world-horizon," *Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1994, 337.

intended to indicate the conceptual relation between face and faciality and should not be taken as comprehensive or decisive ontological analyses of the lifeworld as such.

6.2.1 Practical Horizons of the Other

“Practical horizon,” refers to the horizon of meaning belonging to “the ordinary and everyday—relieving oneself, donning clothes, eating rice, lying down when tired” (Lin-chi) or the day-to-day world of “eschatological ordinariness” (Nishitani). In the practical coping of our daily lives, we must cope with Others. We labour and trade with the Others, must manage and obey Others, converse with and befriend Others, tolerate and frustrate the Other, ignore and desire Others. On this horizon, we cannot help but be a witness to what the Other is capable of, which is to say that in our daily coping we come to know something of the Other. Simply put, we gain experience of Others.

In Heideggerean terms, this practical mode of understanding of the Other is the kind of understanding that provides the condition for the possibility of encountering the Other within the referential framework of the world’s significance. It is an understanding that is embedded in practices, patterned in our consciousness, and inscribed within our habit body. It is as much an instinctual understanding of Others—a kind of “gut” knowledge—as it is conscious and articulate. For precisely these reasons, our practical experience of Others plays as significant a role in shaping our projective understandings of heretofore unknown Others as it does for familiars. Moreover, due to its first-hand concreteness, practical experience can perform a dramatic revisioning of, as well as exercising a stubborn grip on, our perception of Others.

6.2.2 Theoretical Horizons of the Other

As one might expect, the concept of “theoretical horizon” denotes the horizon of meaning structured by theoretical, speculative, and abstract thought. Unlike the practical horizon, wherein we gather concrete experience that guides our pragmatic coping with and alongside the Other, the theoretical horizon is propositionally-centered and concerns ontological beliefs about what the Other is. The theoretical horizon, therefore, is structured by discourses bearing on ontological belief. The basic point is that developments in our theoretical commitments constitute real changes in our ontological conception of things, which in turn affects our experience of Others. For example, our growing understanding of the intelligence and emotional lives of dolphins has had a real impact on the general perception of dolphins (i.e., *qua* generalized Other) as beings worthy of moral consideration. What is more is that these scientific contributions to our understanding of the concept “dolphin” ingress into specific experiences of individual dolphins (i.e., *qua* concrete Other). Any appreciation of a particular dolphin, therefore, begins with a wider understanding of the kinds of things that dolphins are. In short, theoretical understanding of the generalized Other has significant consequences for our capacity to accommodate and appreciate the alterity of the concrete Other—especially where our practical experience of such Others is limited.

Theorizing about the Other provides a formal and abstract way of coming to know certain things about the Other, even if this generalized knowing is structured in terms of the universal. But, once again, approaching the Other through the universal, which is to say through concepts, is not in and of itself imperialism: the concept can constitute openness to particularity as easily as it can constitute blindness. Indeed, the imaginative production of concepts can radically liberate experience.

In "The Reenchantment of the World," Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine argue for the beneficial collaboration of conceptual and scientific experimentation. Commenting on A. N. Whitehead and Gilles Deleuze, they write: "Whitehead even inverted the opposition, reserving for philosophy the task of producing, through the play of quite abstract concepts, real experiences in their concrete richness. And Deleuze even goes so far as to speak, with respect to such a philosophical ambition, of *empiricism*."¹⁵ As part of this conception of the "new" science, Stengers and Prigogine are also aware of the inherent risk accompanying the productive possibilities of conceptual experimentation. According to Stengers, there is always a risk in any decision about how to approach a "complex" object of study: "Every question is a wager concerning what the interrogated object is sensitive to, and no method is neutral with respect to this problem. The problem of relevance does not lead to irrationalism, but to the ever-present risk of 'silencing' the very thing one is interrogating" (*Pol* 17). Risk resides in the fact that there is no simple method for deciding which concepts will offer a productive point of departure and which concepts will further alienate the Other. Ultimately then, the theorist must be guided by practical wisdom in order to decide which route among many may be the most fruitful. This practical wisdom is nothing other than the pre-giveness that provides some leading-clue suggesting an appropriate mode of approach. In other words, there does exist an implicit

¹⁵ Isabelle Stengers, *Power and Invention: Situating Science*. Trans. Paul Bairns. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 55; hereafter indicated as "*PI*." Stengers and Prigogine quote Deleuze on the relation between concept production and empiricism from the introduction to his *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, xx-xxi: "Empiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to a lived experience. On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts [...] Only an empiricist could say: concepts are indeed things, but things in their free and wild state, beyond 'anthropological predicates.' I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentred centre, from an always displaced periphery which displaces and differentiates them."

propriety within givenness that can be mobilized to help discriminate between productive and unproductive modes of approach.¹⁶

The problem of the concept in relation to alterity, therefore, only concerns whether our understanding of the Other freezes at the universal or whether the universal opens up an understanding that develops in accordance with the particularity of the Other. In most cases, it is not the concept *per se*, but the particular *use* of the concept that can be hostile to alterity. Concepts are a simply another way of being towards the Other, and therefore can be benign or malignant depending on whether one uses the concept sincerely as a way of orienting oneself towards the Other or insincerely as a representation, a surrogate, and a standing-in for the Other. In the first instance, the concept is an instrument of discovery that expands the horizons of one's encounter with the Other, while in the second case, the concept is an instrument of concealment that compresses the encounter with the Other to the point of virtually abandoning experience altogether.

6.2.3 Affective Horizons of the Other

The notion of "affective horizon" indicates a horizon of engagement constituting our intelligent orientation towards aesthetic and psychological experience. The focus on affectivity is an attempt to differentiate the concrete field of feeling from aesthetics as an object-centered approach and from psychology as a belief-centered approach. Affectivity is cognitive, but not abstractly so. To put it simply, affectivity is a way of knowingly relating to the Other that is importantly different, but not wholly separate, from practical

¹⁶ For example, social customs (*mores*) of civility, politeness, and etiquette do not specify how one should request a favour from an Other, but they do provide a basic pre-understanding about which styles of approach will surely undermine the success of the request and which styles of approach will tend towards success. In general, since ethical and epistemological normativity are structurally dependent on alterity, they obligate us to approach the Other in ways that strive to maximally accommodate the alterity of the Other.

and theoretical interactions. While we encounter the Other within fields of practical orientation and within fields of theoretical orientation, we also encounter her within fields of affective orientation. One interacts with the Other in the process of trying to achieve some end (knowing how to do something), in the process of pursuing cognitively rich experiences (knowing what something is), and in the process of feeling one's way through the world (knowing how something is). As children, we develop into adults within a ubiquitous field of affectivity, which means that most people possess a relatively refined affective sense about Others. This affective sense can run from an articulable folk psychology to an intuitive empathetic responsiveness.

In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Erich Fromm speaks to the dramatic role that affectivity plays in our basic perception of the Other:

Another way of making the other a "nonperson" is by cutting all affective bonds with him. This occurs as a permanent state of mind in certain severe pathological cases, but it can also occur transitorily in one who is not sick. It does not make any difference whether the object of one's aggression is a stranger or a close relative or a friend; what happens is that the aggressor cuts the other person off emotionally and "freezes" him. The other ceases to be experienced as human and becomes a "thing—over there." Under these circumstances there are no inhibitions against even the most severe forms of destructiveness. There is good clinical evidence for the assumption that destructive aggression occurs, at least to a large degree, in conjunction with momentary or chronic emotional withdrawal.¹⁷

Phenomenologically, our experience of the Other licenses or permits certain forms of being towards the Other and, as Fromm makes clear, affectivity plays a vital role in constituting our experience of the Other. In other words, while affectivity does not suddenly transform our moral beliefs, it is constitutive of how particular Others are

¹⁷ Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Henry Holt, 1973, 147; hereafter indicated as "AHD."

disclosed in relation to moral belief, namely, as morally considerable or not.¹⁸ However, if our experience of an Other, or a class of like Others, consistently discloses these Others as morally considerable, then our moral beliefs ought to be revised in accordance with this experience.

6.3 Depth and the Halo of Alterity

The interweaving of such backgrounds (e.g., practical, theoretical, affective, etc.) provides the global phenomenological horizon in which Others are involved and from which we understand the Other. Since the Other is always integrated in the lifeworld, these horizons contributing to faciality constitute the pre-experiential basis for encountering the alterity of the Other. In other words, these preontological understandings provide the context from which we see the Other and in which we see the Other. As such, the sense of these horizons carries over into our experience of the Other, because they contain the constitutive standards that structure the sense of the Other as a possible candidate for interaction. Epistemologically, faciality is the *tacit dimension* informing the full significance of the face: "It [seeing *from* the proximal (faciality) to the distal (face)] now becomes a means of making certain things function as the proximal terms of tacit knowing, so that instead of observing them in themselves, we may be aware of them in their bearing on the comprehensive entity which they constitute."¹⁹ Consequently, it is possible to explicitly appropriate the determinate presence of the Other, but it is impossible to appropriate the total horizon of faciality giving meaning to the face of the Other, which entails that there is always a potential alterity to which one can attend.

¹⁸ More precisely, there is the primitive question about the boundaries of moral considerability, as well as questions about an Other's place within the boundaries of moral consideration. Even within the domain of considerables, some are disclosed as more considerable than others.

¹⁹ Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*. New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc, 1966, 18.

Properly understood, then, the face stretches from the flat brightness of pure presence to the inscrutable darkness of the horizons of faciality, that is, from relative alterity to the absolute alterity of the Other. The fringe of alterity surrounding the Other is the "halo" of the Other. It is not a halo of light, which is to say presence, but a halo of difference that silhouettes the Other. This halo says nothing about the divinity of the Other, but it does describe the normative dimension of the experience of the Other: the alterity and autonomy of the Other. To perceive the halo of the Other is to perceive the Other as morally considerable, namely, as irreducible to the projects of the Same. Once again, however, this does not mean that we bestow the Other with moral considerability, but that the Other gives meaning to moral considerability as such: the autonomy of the Other must be an encroachment upon the Same.

Besides Polyani's conception of tacit knowing, Whitehead's articulation of "symbolic reference" affords an especially helpful conceptual device for explicating the perceptual-epistemological relationship between the foreground of face and the background of faciality. For Whitehead, "presentational immediacy" and "causal efficacy" describe two distinct perceptual and epistemological orders, namely, the order of sense data, which as knowledge is "vivid, precise, and barren,"²⁰ and the order of causation, which is "insistent, vague, haunting, unmanageable [...] heavy with the contact of the things gone by, which lay their grip on our immediate selves" (S 43-4). Presentational immediacy concerns the direct perception of the contemporary world, while causal efficacy asserts the past of the historical world.

²⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism. Its Effect and Meaning*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1985, 23; hereafter indicated as "S."

For Whitehead, then, a symbol exists as a mixed mode of reference wherein the determinate perception of presentational immediacy is given meaning and importance by the indeterminate perception of causal efficacy: "The contrast between the comparative emptiness of Presentational Immediacy and the deep significance disclosed by Causal Efficacy is at the root of the pathos which haunts the world" (S 47). According to Whitehead, presentational immediacy provides a manageable focal point around which a wider significance gathers:

But for all their vagueness, for all their lack of definition, these controlling presences [causal efficacy], these sources of power, these things with an inner life, with their own richness of content, these beings, with the destiny of the world hidden in their natures, are what we want to know about (S 57).

The face "symbolizes" the moral considerability of the Other, which is to say that the unmanageable alterity of faciality is asserted through the immediately appropriated presence of the face. The relationship between the explicit presence of the face and the implicit background of faciality gives the face its depth, which in turn governs the density and intensity of the halo of the Other. If the horizons constituting faciality are parochial, reductive, and dull, then the experience of the Other becomes correspondingly thin, lacking a robust sense of alterity—it becomes easy for the Same to presume it comprehends the Other. However, when the diversity, complexity, and vividness of these horizons increase, then the Other is disclosed in terms of a depth that is impossible to ignore. And since the development of the theoretical horizon, in particular, is essentially transpersonal, historically extended, and regulated by institutional norms, it offers a critical perspective(s) with which an individual's practical and affective horizons must reckon: an individual cannot make of the Other whatever it wants without sacrificing her efficacious participation in the larger discourses and practices of the community. In other words,

unrestrained capriciousness and idiosyncrasy of belief is costly from the standpoint of influence. At the same time, however, developments in the knowledge of the community, at the macro level, and the acquisition of this knowledge by the individual, at the micro level, works to foster the density and intensity with which the Other presses.²¹ It is precisely the Same's investment in knowing that necessarily leads to a raising of its consciousness about difference. Indeed, Hegel has taught us that genuine advancement in knowing requires more than the mere accumulation and simple aggregation of new facts; it requires the critical appropriation of previous paradigms of knowing and a growing sensitivity to what is left unknown. Higher forms of knowledge, therefore, demand the acknowledgement of difference. Once again, a passage from Dewey addressing the relationship between depth and the edification of thought offers a final reflection for this section:

The greater the gap, the disparity, between what has become a familiar possession and the traits presented in new subject-matter, the greater is the burden imposed upon reflection; the distance between old and new is the measure of the range and depth of thought required (*EN* xiii-xiv).

Within the framework proposed by this study, the distance between presence and absence structures the experiential depth of the Other in terms of difference and discloses the halo of the Other as autonomous and morally considerable.

²¹ This is why it is not the case that the relationship between education and the appreciation of alterity is merely the consequence of socialization, that is, if socialization is understood merely as conformity rather than as an initiation into community knowledge. Knowledge is edifying precisely because it can dramatically reshape one's perception of the world in ways that necessarily challenge oversimplifications of the Other. While there are some obvious qualifications one can make concerning the inculcation of problematic values, e.g., sexist values, education is essentially subversive, which is to say that it is an effective means for overcoming parochialism and expanding horizons. N.B., the conception of "knowledge" here is not neutral, but should be read as *excluding* grossly reductive models of knowing, which in their excess of reduction cease to be effective ways of knowing, i.e., cease to be knowledge at all.

6.4 Non-Human Others²²

Contemporary discourse about the Other, and on behalf of the Other, seeks to overcome our fundamental inhumanity towards the difference of the "stranger." And yet, the problem of inhumanity towards difference should not be narrowed to a concern about recognizing conspecifics, since the world is not given simply in terms of biological relevance (i.e., instinctual meaning) but includes cultural significance (i.e., symbolic meaning). Thus, moral considerability should not be construed as a question of recovering a biological unity with conspecifics, but a question of realizing a post-biological solidarity with non-specifics. Consequently, any full-fledged conception of alterity must be able to escape the trap of anthropocentrism.

It is simply absurd to advocate the appreciation of radical difference and Otherness, while continuing to disregard the non-human. The mounting danger of environmental catastrophe speaks directly to this stubborn unwillingness to seriously entertain non-human alterity. Thus, while postmodern critiques struggle to de-center the dominant discourses of the enlightenment, they tend to remain content with retaining this keystone of the Enlightenment. However, the real labour of deconstructing Enlightenment commitments requires critically engaging their anthropocentric basis. The fact that colonial and racial discourses were predicated on culling the human from the non-human indicates the complicity of anthropocentrism in shoring up these chauvinisms. At bottom, anthropocentrism is egoism writ large and thus, like egoism, it includes an implicit logic of hostility towards alterity. Consequently, overcoming anthropocentrism by accommodating

²² The order of the following sections—animals, environments, things—reflects current discourses concerning the intrinsic moral status of non-human Others. As such, animal rights discourse has made further headway regarding the intrinsic moral worth of individual animals, whereas the moral status of environments has remained thoroughly mediated by human interests. Obviously, the question of the moral status of things has not been a serious question for discussion.

the alterity of non-human Others will contribute to our capacity to better accommodate the alterity of human Others.²³

The following sections concerning animals, environments, and things, therefore, will offer a testing ground for applying the conception of alterity offered in this study. As a testing ground, these analyses provide tentative sojourns chiefly aimed at clarifying basic theoretical points, rather than presenting a definitive application (A full analysis of alterity demands a nuanced treatment of these various types of non-human Others, but limitations of space require that this project belong to a separate study). Secondly, since intimating the alterity of the Other is dependent on a background of theoretical and practical modes of relation, changes in theoretical commitments and social practices can dramatically transform how the alterity of the Other is revealed. Indeed, part of these analyses will involve explicating the relationship between these constitutive backgrounds and the emergence of alterity. The focus of these analyses will be on first-person phenomenological encounters with the Other *qua* Other, and the subsequent first-person awakening to the Other as morally considerable. Consequently, they will bracket questions about institutional expansions of moral considerability, which are often more an extension of anthropocentrism than a genuine recognition of the alterity of non-human Others.²⁴

²³ It is telling that the developmental trajectory of cruelty in serial killers often moves from animal to human victims. This indicates that cruelty as a mode of relating to Others contains a propensity to transgress formalized boundaries of moral consideration. In a parallel fashion, caring as a mode of relation can also be blind to institutional boundaries as to who or what deserves moral consideration. Ultimately then, relational modes are more significant for the question of moral considerability than metaphysical attempts to define the domain.

²⁴ For example, the protection of endangered species is not justified in terms of the intrinsic moral considerability of these creatures as non-human Others, but in terms of the anthropocentric project of environmental stewardship. One obvious counter-example is the "Great Ape Project," which argues for the extension of human rights to all the Great Apes based on the utter conspicuousness of

6.4.1 Animals

The theory of alterity presented within this study holds that moral considerability is a consequence of the experience of autonomy *qua* alterity, which, in turn, is dependent on modes of interaction in which the Other *qua* Same orients us toward the Other *qua* Other.

Although they lack linguistic capacities for expressing their inner perspective on the world, we *experience* animals as autonomous loci of experience and movement, regardless of whether they are higher-order mammals or single-celled organisms. Since we encounter phenomena within some horizon of understanding, the manifest behaviour of animals is already given to us as indicating some seat of cognition—regardless of whether this cognition is intelligent problem-solving, awareness of relevant features of the environment, or reactions preserving the autopoietic identity of a simple living system in a far from equilibrium state. The very concept of *animal* includes the capacity for self-locomotion and responsiveness to an environment. Thus, to see an animal is to see something that occupies some “perspective” on its world.²⁵

This basic Heideggerean point about the pre-given intelligibility of the lifeworld provides a helpful starting point for this analysis, but it is insufficient for accounting for our encounters with an animal *qua* individual. Those more focused engagements that spark our awakening to an animal’s alterity and our awakening to its moral considerability. This kind of a fundamental alteration is not reducible to pre-understanding, because such pre-understanding is constitutionally blind to uniqueness—it is always re-cognition. In

their robust alterity. And yet, the fact that this project remains marginalized says something about the kinds of arguments that can get purchase on an anthropocentric worldview.

²⁵ Contrary to popular belief, consciousness is not a necessary condition for having a perspective on the world. Rather, perspective needs to be construed as *a way of being towards an environment* that is distinctive of an individual’s place in the world. In other words, the capacity to select relevant features in an environment is sufficient for constituting the “perspective” of an organism.

contrast, awakening to an Other's moral considerability occurs within an intimate mode of relating to an Other *qua* unique individual. Once again, this is not an issue of the presumptive moral considerability belonging to a generalized Other, but the direct experience of moral considerability in the "face" of the concrete Other. As such, it does not concern the particular beliefs that one holds, but a transformative experience of the Other as morally considerable.

To begin with, the concrete presence of an animal Other is as horizontal as human givenness in that corporeal and behavioural presence points beyond what is immediately given to what is ultimately unavailable. What is more, the greater the sense of presence, the more vivid the intimation of the Other's alterity is likely to be. This is precisely why we are more likely to awaken to the alterity of increasingly complex organisms, which tend to manifest a presence that is more easily appreciated. For example, intelligent behaviour (sapience) offers a superior horizontal spread in which the alterity of the Other is more dramatically announced. The problem-solving behaviour of a chimpanzee or dolphin draws us into their alterity such that we are simply struck by the depth of this Other. Witnessing intelligence or emotional responsiveness leads naturally to an awakening to the Other's alterity, because what is given announces what cannot be given.²⁶ Thus, it is necessary to flatly reject any analysis that reduces such an encounter to the logic of identity, which is to say that these displays of intelligence or emotional response allow us to identify with the chimp or dolphin and, on that basis, recognize his alterity. Such an

²⁶ Here, "leads naturally" speaks to the most likely trajectory unless, of course, something intervenes from the outside. For example, the technological setting in which a researcher studies chimp behaviour founds an institutional distanciation. This distancing is a non-intimate mode of relatedness that resists the phenomenological movement from presence to difference. Behaviour is taken as mere "data," rather than as the expression of an irreducible perspective on the world. To put it differently, as data this particular manifestation of intelligent behaviour is taken to be an *instance of chimpanzee behaviour* rather than as a *unique expression of this individual*. Once again, the universal insulates experience against the individual.

analysis is, simply stated, phenomenologically false. Rather, we see alterity in the behaviour, we directly perceive the depth of the Other, and we wonder at this “remainder” that we had not seen a moment ago. Since it is in our failure to reduce the Other to pure presence that we confront the difference / autonomy of the Other, awakening to the Other is not like looking in a mirror, but like looking into an abyss.

To be sure, identification is involved, but its real significance lies in its ultimate *failure*. “Identification,” here, concerns the attempt to assimilate everything to pure presence, that is, to totalize what is before us. It is the inherent imperialism of the will to truth that drives the phenomenological movement into the abyss of the Other. This is also why pre-understanding provides the departure point of this movement. And, as knowledge develops, the horizon of what is given as present develops. These transformations continue to discipline the will to truth by compelling it to appropriate the world sincerely (i.e., with a view to correctness). For instance, it is no longer possible to understand a dolphin as a mere fish. Contemporary knowledge about dolphins ensures that we cannot rationally take dolphin behaviour as mere mechanical responses to stimuli. Instead, we must appropriate this behaviour as expressing a field of sapience that is, in principle, unavailable to us—that is, if we are not to abandon rationality altogether. In plain terms, it is precisely because we know more about dolphins in general that we are more likely to awaken to the alterity of a particular dolphin.

This basic point can also be made from the other direction, namely, one could imagine a thought experiment in which one knew literally nothing about the existence of animals (human beings excluded). In this case, one’s first experience of an animal’s movement might not be viewed as locomotion, but as mere motion initiated from without, viz., by external forces such as wind or gravity. Given such an understanding, there could

be no phenomenological movement from what is given to *what cannot be given*, despite the fact that, as with any three-dimensional physical object, there may very well be an appresentational movement from what is given to *what is not given*. As experience develops, however, one would be compelled to see the movement of animals as purposefully directed in the environment. Consequently, previous understanding is corrected by the Other—a correction that insists on the alterity of the Other. But, once again, certain limitations on one's possibilities for interacting with the Other can prevent the full force of the Other's alterity to surface in experience. For example, subsistence living may not allow for the requisite kinds of intimate interactions that would allow animal-Others to stand out in their alterity. Under such pragmatic pressures, animal-Others may simply show up as "food" without the necessary repose to permit the phenomenological confrontation with their alterity to occur.²⁷

However, when the abstract recognition of an animal as a center of experience becomes concrete, that is, when we let ourselves enter into the intimacy of this alterity, then we awaken to the autonomy of this Other. In the living concreteness of this experience, this animal Other passes over into the domain of moral considerables. Such an awakening to moral considerability/alterity is an *emergent property* stemming from my interaction with this animal, which is say that it is "the appearance of an unanalyzable totality of a new entity that renders irrelevant the intelligibility of that which produced it" (PI 12). This formulation of the notion of "emergence" is particularly helpful in view of Isabelle Stengers's somewhat idiosyncratic emphasis on the *passing over* from intelligibility

²⁷ In the case of animistic or totemic societies, whose underlying worldview asserts a fundamental continuity with the natural world, it is not a matter of finding time to interact with nature in a non-instrumental fashion, because they begin from a standpoint of spiritual-metaphysical intimacy with nature. In contrast, cultures that begin from a standpoint of separation from the natural world, e.g., European settlers in North America, that must transcend a subsistence relation towards nature in order to occupy a standpoint capable of appreciating the alterity of non-human Others.

to the appearance of the unanalyzable. In the context of the question of the Other, alterity is what "appears" and renders the intelligible morally "irrelevant." The more intimate the relationship, the more alterity I intimate and the more intensely autonomy thrusts itself upon me. I am compelled to recognize that the Other's existence transcends its role within my projects, and thus I come to appreciate the integrity of the Other's "projects" and "interests" as distinct from my own.

However, this movement from the formal recognition of an animal's alterity, which is weakly given in abstract terms, is often not allowed to enter directly and concretely into the content of my experience. Rather, theoretical and practical commitments prevent my entertaining real intimacy vis-à-vis this animal Other. For example, theoretical, practical, and institutional distinctions between farm animals and household pets already predetermine the kinds of interactions we permit ourselves. My play with a neighbour's dog is a kind of interaction that allows the alterity of the dog to emerge with a kind of robustness that is impossible within the institutional distance structuring interactions with commercial farm animals. Play is an intimate mode of interacting with pets, hence, pets are experienced as having individualized personalities. In contrast, we perceive commercial animals as submerged in the bland sameness of their collectivities, because of our failure to relate with them in a substantive way. In other words, we are prone to think of cattle rather than an individual cow, chickens rather than an individual chicken, etc., which says a great deal about our habitual relations to animals that are not pre-given as pets.

And yet, the revelation or concealment of individual personality is less an expression of the intrinsic nature of a species, than it is an expression of the intimacy of the interactions we allow ourselves to enter into. To be sure, there are vast disparities in

relative complexity. For instance, disparities in levels of sentience and sapience have real implications for the kinds of interactions that are possible. The kinds of interactions available in dealing with a dog, dolphin, or chimpanzee are much more varied and complex than the kinds of interactions available in relating to an iguana, a goldfish, or a paramecium. In other words, the complexity of a chimpanzee presents a horizon of understanding that allows us to intimate a greater sense of alterity, in terms of its emotional life, for example, than is possible in relation to a goldfish. This is not merely an aspect of our subjective relation, i.e., emotional attachment, but an objective feature of the complexity of the animal. In other words, it is *not* a matter of projecting intelligence and emotional complexity on the chimpanzee, it is simply that we directly confront chimpanzees as intelligent and with rich emotional lives, unless of course some theoretical, institutional, or practical commitment intervenes and suppresses the full emergence of its alterity.

6.4.2 Environments

On the one hand, this analysis of non-human Others necessitates engaging the alterity of environments as a phenomenon somewhat distinct from animality or thingness, while on the other, the generality required only admits of a couple of simple, but important points.²⁸

As something distinct from the mere aggregation of "individual" objects, an environment is defined by its fundamental relationality. Moreover, as the horizon in which

²⁸ While animals are clearly integral aspects of environments, which means that abstracting the notion of an "environment" is admittedly artificial, the fact is that discussions about moral considerability treat individuals, animal species, and environments as distinct spheres of concern. Moreover, in that safeguarding the alterity of an animal is distinct from what it means to safeguard the alterity of an environment, separately analyzing their respective claims to alterity is necessary.

"individuals" are found, environments represent the condition for the possibility of this individuality. Hence, it is in relation to these two aspects, which constitutes the sense of an environment, that one experiences an environment's alterity. Firstly, the alterity of an environment, properly speaking, emerges in the thinking's attempt to grasp the relationality and interdependence of the individuals comprising the system. In short, one wonders at the interactions constituting the identity of an environment, as well as the inter-environmental interactions comprising *the* environment at large. The degree to which one enters into that relationality determines whether the alterity of the environment or the alterity of the things in that environment is revealed. The Daoists of classical China and the deep ecologists of today represent a mode of interaction that grapples passionately with the alterity of environments, and subsequently affirms the moral considerability of environments. Secondly, as the transcendental condition for the possibility of individuals, the alterity of an environment is refracted through certain modalities of interacting with the animals and things in that environment (i.e., the spotted-owl becomes the focal point for considering the forests of the Northwest). In general, however, we have been slow in developing the proper resources for encountering the kind of holism and interdependence that defines an environment. The underlying logic of the will to truth and the appropriative functioning of the Same has positioned itself in relation to discrete objects and thereby pursued a world in this image. Therefore, as the possibilities for attending to environments mature, the alterity of environments will enter into our experience with a new kind of intensity and the mounting question about the moral status of environments will gather a new kind of plausibility in light of these enriched accommodations of the environmental Other. Unfortunately, it may very well be environmental degradation that will render the

alterity of environments conspicuous and provoke this newfound appreciation for their alterity.

6.4.3 Things

We live in the midst of things. Like persons, animals, and environments, the kinds of relatedness available to us in our relation to things open up fields of alterity to which we can explicitly attend. Most obviously, the extension and opacity of things means that we encounter things in terms of the alterity of their perceptual presence—that is, in terms of their 3-dimensional presence.

While one can note a plethora of phenomenological analyses concerning the spatial dimensionality of objects, Samuel Todes analysis in *Body and World* is one of the most intriguing:

Our body asymmetry and the free reversibility of our activity bear the significance of our activity as a *seeking*. But we cannot *find* our self in this search without encountering something, viz., an object of irreversibly ordered parts, which mirrors our own irreversible body structure. This theme is substantiated and augmented by phenomenological analyses of: how the *irreversibility* of perceptual time is grounded in the irreversible functional asymmetry of our forward directed body; how *passing an object* gives it a concrete unity; how the satisfactory character of our perception of an object is expressed by our sense of *practical self-composure*—by which we are fulfilled as percipient, gaining a sense that our concrete skillful activity is unified correlatively with the object successfully perceived.²⁹

What makes his take so interesting is the fact that Todes contends that we must “find” our self in the world by locating our self with respect to objects. For Todes, we are need-driven, which is to say that our bodily existence is fundamentally defined in terms of “seeking”: we seek shelter, food, tools, companions, aesthetic objects, etc. We encounter satisfactory objects, then, as the completion of seeking.

²⁹ Samuel Todes, *Body and World*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, 106.

However, Todes account runs beyond biological needs to include our basic ontological needs for temporal and spatial organization. While the human body is the condition for the possibility of spatiality, for Todes, it acquires its determinacy vis-à-vis things in the world. Hence, his claim that objects constitute the sense of our *poise* in the world or our "*practical self-composure*." In short, our sensori-motor intentionality correlates itself or attunes itself as "concrete skillful activity" in relation to perception.

The 3-dimensional structure of an object provides the requisite irreversibility with respect to the unfolding of its presence in relation to the location of our body for coordinating my self. It is vitally important that things have a backside that stands in a definite relation to my stance. In this sense, I am constantly dependent on the alterity of things. It is also significant that there is no essential backside or underside to a thing, which is to say that the alterity of an extended thing is a feature of our relatedness rather than an essential feature inhering in the thing itself. As I move around an object, the alterity of the thing preserves its elusiveness and thereby the requisite constraint for finding myself in space. So while there is no essence to a thing's alterity, the very nature of our possibilities of mutual relatedness ensures that alterity is always an irreducible feature of my perception of things.

In addition to the alterity of a thing's backside, which we associate with its extension and opacity, a thing's solidity and integrity speak to inner horizons that are unavailable. Whereas I can move my body around to the backside of a thing in order to make it available or turn an object over in my hands to avail myself of its underside, I must destroy a thing's present integrity in order to render its inner horizons (alterity) available. In other words, to expose its inwardness is to eliminate the thing as the thing it is. But this is to produce pieces that continue to have inner horizons, which means that while I have

destroyed the integrity of the thing, I have not subdued the alterity of its solidity. The irreducible alterity of physical objects is therefore a phenomenological correlate of the infinite divisibility of matter.³⁰

Due to the restricted possibilities of interaction, the basic mode of alterity belonging to a thing concerns extension and integrity.³¹ The implication for an ethics of alterity is that even as a perceptual object we directly encounter the integrity of a thing. In its most primitive form, this appreciation is expressed in our movement *around* objects, but it can also be seen in our basic dismay at the gratuitous destruction of things—regardless of whether one has any conscious sense of material objects as “morally considerable.” The solidity, opacity, and integrity of objects provides the perceptual contour against which the Same *qua* self discovers its limits and in which it finds its way in the world. Thus while we normally ignore the alterity of the things determining our world, we must also admit our deep dependence on the productive resistance of things.

6.5 The Ethics of Knowing

The will to truth has constructed an ideal conception of knowledge and knowledge-practices around a categorical *insistence* that the world as such is knowable: capable of being made explicit, orderly, and predictable. As a regulative ideal, this insistence constitutes a motivating optimism with respect to our knowledge-making projects, but it also motivates a problematic circularity wherein what yields to knowing counts as *real*,

³⁰ Although our conception of the divisibility of matter has change in light of atomic and sub-atomic physics, the transition to these orders of the real is also a transition away from the possibility of a perceptual relation to the real.

³¹ A more complete analysis of things would require a consideration of inanimate things, artifacts, aesthetic objects, art objects, and sacred objects, which introduces horizons of cultural meaning that expands the possibilities of interaction, and the correlative “sense” of alterity attending these different classes of objects.

while anything that resists must be a mere appearance, an epiphenomenon, or a kind of meaningless static in the gaps between the real. This insistence effects a radical reduction of the richness of a thing's being and a fundamental dislocation from the context in which it is embedded (its *ethos*). However, a new turn towards a different kind of knowing is beginning to surface in certain fields of inquiry. This *knowing differently* includes a newfound humility with respect to the insistence of the will to truth and a newfound intimacy with respect to the process of coming to know the Other. The following sections will examine alternative paradigms of knowing in view of their way of orienting towards the Other, which is to say the ethics of their consideration of the Other.

6.5.1 Reason as "Instrumental" and Rationality as "Self-interest"

In their 1999 book, *Empathetic Education: An Ecological Perspective on Educational Knowledge*, Ronald Laura and Matthew Cotton argue that our modern conception of instrumental reason, with its correlative conception of knowledge as "manipulative power," is anathema to the cultivation of empathy and the appreciation of difference, especially in relation to non-human Others: "Our argument is that we have institutionalized a form of knowledge the prime motivation of which is the quest for power, domination and control."³² Moreover, this conception of knowledge translates into a technological perspective in which modes of relating towards alterity is defined by means-ends thinking striving for the subjugation of alterity, namely, the suppression of that which continues to stand outside of mechanisms of control:

³² Ronald S. Laura & Matthew C. Cotton, *Empathetic Education: An Ecological Perspective on Educational Knowledge*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1999, 40; hereafter indicated as "EE."

Technological control in the service of human advantage traditionally depends upon recasting the face and the things of the earth in a form which makes their behaviour predictable in ways which suit our needs and desires. The process by way of which technology achieves this measure of control depends upon what we shall call "*transformative subjugation*" (EE 48).

Laura and Cotton are primarily engaging anthropocentrism as it is asserted through technology and as intrinsically hostile to the alterity of nature. While their concerns focus on the environment, the basic logic of their analysis can be easily generalized across other modalities of the Same. In particular, Laura and Cotton draw an important connection between the appropriative interests of the Same in relation to its systematic *construction* of "objects" that are amenable to appropriation. They contend that the "promise of control and subjugation" depends on the transformation of "living things" into "dead things" that are easily controllable:

The more alive and conscious something is, the more incalculable its behaviour becomes. This being so, the world of technological control determines that the world be reconstituted by things which have by way of technology had the very life within them systematically withdrawn from them. Technology has indeed made us powerful, but the world over which it has bequeathed us power is a world of dead things. The technological world is a world we may, to a large extent control, but the world we control is paradoxically in essence a world of death and conformity (EE 49).

In other words, instrumental reason *thinks* objects in a way that renders them amenable to control and, more importantly, it thinks objects as *deserving* of being controlled. While this language of "deserving" is somewhat exaggerated when applied to "natural resources," this is only because natural objects of appropriation are normally excluded from any axiological consideration that is not, at bottom, economic. What motivates this language of desert, however, are the discourses of colonialism, classism, racism, and sexism as extensions of this logic, which have all sought to justify subjugation by projecting the

objects of control as intrinsically defective and thereby constituting them as deserving of discipline and coercive management.

Instead of reinforcing an instrumental epistemology predicated on the paradigm of knowledge as power in our educational institutions, Laura and Cotton argue for a "liberationist epistemology" predicated on holism and a paradigm of knowledge as "connection." Consequently, they turn to *systems theory* as a mode of theorizing that exemplifies holism, interdependence, balance, complexity, and non-reduction. In particular, Laura and Cotton find inspiration in the fact that such holistic thinking presupposes a kinship between knower and known. It is a conception of knowledge that factors in the "participatory consciousness" of the knower and stands in sharp contrast to the "objective" conception of knowledge, which separates itself from what it dominates. Commenting on the notion of "participatory consciousness" in the work of L. Heshusius, Laura and Cotton write, "One suspends the egocentric 'self' and '...is turned toward the other (human and non-human) 'without being in need of it' or wanting to appropriate it to achieve something' (Heshusius, 1994, p. 16)" (EE 170).³³ They view Heshusius' "participatory consciousness" as implying an ethic, "which sees intrinsic worth in the 'other' i.e., other people and the natural environment" (EE 170).

While it is clear that a shift to a "liberationist epistemology" would constitute a better epistemology from a moral perspective, does it constitute a better epistemology from an epistemological perspective? Or are ethics and epistemology essentially at odds? From the standpoint of a commitment to truth, the following off-handed statement from Laura and Cotton in the wake of developments in non-linear dynamics and chaotic systems is

³³ The reference for Heshusius is: "Freeing Ourselves from Objectivity: Managing Subjectivity or Turning Toward a Participatory Mode of Consciousness" *Educational Researcher*, (1994) April.

quite provocative: "we continue to interact with nature in a mechanically interventionist fashion, though the world we interact with its essentially non-mechanistic" (EE 158). If this statement is true, then, at least on the face of things, a liberationist epistemology promises to be a better epistemology. In short, the epistemic commitments of the paradigm would seem to be more in line with the way the world is.

For the sake of simplicity, this section has presumed a heuristic distinction between reason and rationality, which roughly corresponds to the distinction between theory and action. Hence, instrumental reason has been treated as primarily an epistemological category, whereas rational self-interest shall be considered primarily as an ethical category.

This study presumes an understanding of ethics as a normative orientation towards the Other: it is defined by its Other-centeredness. At the same time, the modern conception of rationality guiding our thinking about ethics is thoroughly determined by self-interest: it is defined by its self-centeredness. Thus, there exists a basic conflict at the heart of contemporary philosophical discourse between a commitment to ethical thinking and a commitment to rational thinking. To state the point baldly: for an ethics to be rational, it must be structured in terms of a logic of self-interest, which means suppressing the logic of Other-centered-interest that constitutes the difference of ethics.

The modern conception of rationality as self-interest owes a great deal to economic theory, wherein rational agents are defined as acting in their own best interest. Even more tightly, "best interest" has been functionally defined as the optimal results of a cost-benefit analysis. The deep tension between the Other-centeredness of ethics and this economic model of rationality appears even more ironic in view of the fact that economics originally developed as a sub-discipline of ethical theory, but now has paradigmatically shaped the very conception of rationality.

The fact that rational self-interest has trumped the interest of ethics can be clearly seen in the way economic models of reciprocity dominate ethics as “justice.” But this logic of reciprocity is nothing other than an instrument for preserving the power of the Same, and, as such, fails to adequately model the moral situation. The rationality of such ethical theorizing demands the incorporation of mechanisms for preserving the Same in relation to the presumed danger posed by the Other. But this demand ignores the concrete context of the moral situation, that is, the fact that self-interest is ubiquitous.

Consequently, it does not need to be built into ethics. It is the existential basis of the need for an ethics: self-interest is the rule for which ethics seeks the exception—the Other.

From an objective perspective, one might object that “the entire moral domain is peopled by Others in relation to Others.” But this simply reveals the fundamental inadequacy of “objectivity” as a theoretical starting-point. Such a putative “view from nowhere” substitutes the Other-Other relation for the Same-Other relation, thus presupposing equality, wherein ethics concerns a fundamental inequality of relation. Equality, here, is not about distributive justice; instead, it is a deeper question about the inescapable inequality of the Same in relating itself to the Other. An inequality that dominates the structure of moral decision: the Same necessarily reserves the power of decision about whether or not to violate or aid the Other. To reverse the direction of this relation does not escape the structure of a Same-Other relation and realize the objectivity of the Other-Other relation. Instead, it is ask about a different Same-Other relation. This is precisely why the question of the Other is a question at the heart of the phenomenological relation and precisely why it demands a phenomenological response.

Before pushing on to the next section, I want to offer a provocative juxtaposition concerning the relationship between instrumental reason, rational self-interest and the ef-

facement of alterity, on the one hand, and the release from instrumental reason, rational self-interest and the corresponding appreciation of alterity on the other. The value of this juxtaposition lies more in the dramatic contrast it poses between possible modes of being towards the Other, than in its direct philosophical implications. Ultimately, the contrast shows more than it tells.

The first side of the juxtaposition concerns an observation by Erich Fromm regarding the "worship of technique" and the affective detachment realized through technical-bureaucratic distancing:

The men dropping the bombs were hardly aware that they were killing or burning to death thousands of human beings in a few minutes. They were not concerned with killing and were hardly aware of an enemy. They were concerned with the proper handling of their complicated machine along the lines laid down in meticulously organized plans (*AHD* 385).

The other side of the juxtaposition, however, is more extraordinary, because it involves being on the other side of the plane. It involves a rather striking incident from the Pacific War, which Kojima Hiroshi relates in the "Preface" of his book, *Monad and Thou*:

When enemy planes flew overhead we hid by throwing ourselves to the ground behind anything that would shade us from view. At times the planes flew so close to the ground that we could see the ruddy faces of the pilots aiming their machine-gun fire at anything on the ground. Although we had no weapons to fight against them, the situation increasingly resembled a duel. I would imagine the fate of the unknown pilot flying over me, perhaps the one who would kill me. I would seriously wonder whether he was happier than I, his anonymous potential victim, was. At the same time, suddenly and unexpectedly, I felt my very Being expand as if without limit toward the sky, transparent like a huge glass dome, yet dense and full of Being (*MT* vii).

Kojima credits this experience with his eventual turn towards philosophy and his preoccupation with the relationship between Husserl's concept of the "monad" and Buber's concept of "Thou." What is incredible within Kojima's biographical anecdote is the fact that in the moments surrounding an attack, he was able to enter into an

imaginative relation with the Other that broke, quite radically, with the demands of instrumental reason and self-interested rationality. In the process, Kojima underwent a transformative experience wherein the question of the Other became the decisive question of his philosophical career.

6.5.2 Knowing Differently

Postmodern concerns about “truth” are not a simple call for relativism, as some reactionary voices have feared, but a deep and critical revision of epistemology. Hence, they do not belie a wholesale abandonment of the *practices* of knowing, but the rejection of a specific *project* of knowing. Moreover, this ongoing revision of epistemology is a transformation rooted in the inner logic of its confrontation with alterity. Since epistemology can neither ignore nor overcome alterity, these new discourses represent an attempt to make peace with the Other by dismantling the imperialism of the will to truth. The desired result is a more responsible knowing that is not allergic to specificity, difference, and alterity.

To speak of the ethics of knowing, therefore, is not a simple condemnation of instrumental reason in favour of a vague notion of “primordial” thinking, rather it marks a concern that cuts across this distinction even while retaining its relation to it. The problem with this distinction is that it is too often understood as a simple opposition between “means-ends” thinking and a “mysterious contemplative” mode of approach. Setting up the critique in this way inevitably misses the critical question: what explicit space does a given knowledge-practice leave for Otherness within the confines of the knowing experience? In other words, the critique concerns a basic humility or sincerity with respect to knowing—a disciplining of the vanity that a given knowledge-practice can exercise

alterity from the object of its knowing.³⁴ Such a space for alterity needs to exist at the *formal* level, which is to say in the explicit recognition of the limits of a particular knowledge-practice, as well as at the *experiential* level, which is to say that the persistent alterity of the Other must be conspicuously encountered as integral phenomenological part of the process of coming to know.

At the formal level, this space concerns a knowledge-practice's critical relation to itself, that is, the extent to which it is explicitly aware that its approach to the Other not only implies the necessary coincidence of revealing and concealing, but that it possesses a more or less determinate sense of how this approach reveals and conceals. For example, contemporary modeling in the study of complex-systems not only includes an explicit awareness of the model as an approximation, but also a recognition that a given model only interrogates the represented object in terms of specific properties, while it is necessarily silent with respect to un-modeled properties of the system. Such a model demonstrates sincerity in relation to the object of its representation and humility with respect to the degree and scope of its knowledge-claims. What distinguishes complex-systems theorizing from classical strategies of theorizing is the basic realization that complexity makes knowing something of a compromise, rather than an all-or-nothing venture. Hence, complex-systems theorization includes an explicit space for the unknowable by being attentive to the representational decisions defining the theoretical gaze and by formally representing the limits of representation in the representation itself.

³⁴ This language of "exorcise" is meant to indicate the revenant status that alterity has been accorded by epistemology as an "epiphenomenon" haunting the real, but which is not itself real. Epistemology does not believe in the ghost of the Other, even while attempting to exorcise the Other by explaining away alterity.

While this formal recognition of limits is crucial for the normativity of knowledge-claims, the experiential confrontation of these limits within the unfolding of the knowledge-making process is crucial for the moral normativity of our relation to the object of knowledge. Formalized recognition is an explicit reminder of what needs to be an integral moment within the experiential encounter. It is not enough to theoretically safeguard alterity, which can still be an avoidance or neutralization of alterity, rather it is necessary that one directly engages the limits of knowing in order to confront the alterity of the Other. It is the intimation of the Other's alterity that sobers our practices in relation to the Other. Any formal recognition of the limits of knowing expresses the status of our grip on the Other, but it is in experience that we encounter alterity as that which encroaches upon us. In short, there is a marked difference between the *knowing* of limits and the *living* of limits.

It is worth saying a bit more about what lets complex-systems know differently in relation to Same-centered models of knowledge. Again, Stengers and Prigogine offer something an "inside" analysis of the changes that the practice of science or, more precisely, "good" science is undergoing³⁵:

³⁵ In her essay, "Is there a Women's Science?," Stengers considers the Nobel Prize winning work of Barbara McClintock as exemplifying a science of "singularity." This "affirmation of singularity" concerns McClintock's solitude as a singular woman within a male-dominated community, the singularity of a marginalized scientist operating beyond the disciplinary norms of the scientific community, and the ontological singularity McClintock let be revealed in her object of study (i.e., corn). Stengers views singularity as the "principle of narration" in McClintock's approach: "The kind of intelligibility attained by McClintock does not allow one to forget about the concrete being, to reduce it to what it has allowed to be shown, but to recount its becoming, to understand, as with any real history, under what constraints each grain's history must have been possible, what was the influence of circumstances, what degrees of freedom they allowed to be explored" (PI 128).

Certainly, "to know" has often been identified, during the last three centuries, with "to know how to manipulate." But that is not all there is to it, and the sciences cannot without violence be reduced to a mere project of mastery. They also involve dialogue—not, of course, exchange between subjects, but explorations and questions whose stakes are not those of the silence and submission of the other (PI 35).

This passage from Stengers and Prigogine suggests that the will to truth is already suffering an important metamorphosis. In the narrative they offer, this transformation is a consequence of science's confrontation with the alterity of nature, which they locate in the notion of *physis*, i.e., the "autonomous transformation" of things: "our science is at last on the way to becoming a physical science since it has to finally accept the autonomy of things, and not only of living things" (PI 57).

In particular, the confrontation with non-linear systems and quantum mechanics has revealed the fundamental impossibility of reducing nature to knowledge, and therefore has signaled the death of the theoretical ideal of omniscience.³⁶ The death of this ideal marks a significant *alteration* in the conception of truth towards which the will to truth strives. The result is that science has had to relax its grasp in order to preserve its grip on the world:

At both the macroscopic and microscopic levels, the sciences of nature are thus liberated from a narrow conception of objective reality, which believes that it must in principle deny novelty and diversity in the name of an unchanging universal law. They are freed from a fascination that represented rationality as closed and knowledge as the process of completion. They are from now on open to unpredictability, no longer viewed in terms of an imperfect knowledge, or of insufficient control. Thus, they are open to a dialogue with a nature that cannot be dominated by the theoretical gaze, but must be explored, with an open world to which we belong, in whose construction we participate (PI 40).

³⁶ But as Nietzsche wrote in *The Gay Science* about the death of God: "God is dead; but given the way of men there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. —And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too" (GS §108), we still need to overcome the shadow of omniscience.

Besides contemporary thinking about complex and chaotic systems, the growing currency of philosophical hermeneutics in the humanities indicates another such change. Like systems theory, hermeneutics presupposes finitude, incompleteness, particularity, difference, context, and orientation as irreducible dimensions of understanding. What is more, it has embraced these "obstacles" as the necessary conditions for the possibility of human understanding. And given its intertwining with phenomenology, hermeneutics adopts a fundamental orientation to the Other (*Sache*).

To speak of an ethics of knowing, then, is to speak in terms of a reversal of the traditional relationship where knowledge grounds morality. Instead, an ethics of alterity comes to the fore as that which disciplines our knowledge practices by reserving a space for the critical presence of the Other. In the simplest terms, an ethics of alterity demands resistance to grossly reductive forms of knowing that are constitutionally insincere vis-à-vis alterity.³⁷ Note however, that this is not a simple reversal of the power relation between ethics and epistemology, because there are also good reasons to believe that those modes of knowing that accommodate alterity will make for qualitatively richer forms of knowing. Thus, in an ethical and epistemological sense, an ethics of alterity views *knowing differently* as a *knowing better*.

6.6 Alterity and Cultivation

*Coming or going, day or night, you must strive to face the incomprehensible—Daitô.*³⁸

³⁷ Clearly, explanation constitutes a form of reduction, which does not mean that all explanation is ethically dangerous in its essence, only that *uncritical* explanatory modes that insincerely disregard what lies beyond the bounds of a given explanatory framework (i.e., alterity as critical presence).

³⁸ Kenneth Kraft, *Eloquent Zen. Daitô and Early Japanese Zen*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, 118; hereafter indicated as "EZ."

Cultivation describes the enrichment of the Same not its destruction.³⁹ At the highest limits of cultivation, this enrichment effects a radical *alteration* of the Same (e.g., the realization of the self as nothingness), while, more typically, it involves a refined *reorientation* of the Same (e.g., consciousness raising).

The exhortation from Zen Master Daitô that opens this section offers a disciplinary framework for understanding cultivation in terms of alterity: one must strive to face the “incomprehensible” (*murie no tokoro* 無理会の処). Daitô’s prescription is precisely what is required by an ethics of alterity. We must reconfigure our attention by turning toward alterity, which is more than a simple turning towards the Other—the intentional thesis already clarifies the fact that all intentional activity is defined by Other-directedness.⁴⁰ Our experience of the “Other” is horizontal, and therefore is ambiguous between the Other *qua* Same and the Other *qua* Other. It is not enough to attend to the Other *qua* Same (the comprehensible), which preserves the centrality of self-sameness, rather it is a matter of attending to the Other *qua* Other (the incomprehensible), which is a difference that has the

³⁹ When speaking of the cultivation of the Same, it is under the aspect of the Same *qua* self. The centrality of the self as *the* modality of the Same stems from its strategic place as a point of intervention; hence, the meaningfulness of cultivation. The self occupies a crucial place between the Same in the mode of a physical or biological process and the Same in the mode of a cultural or ideological process. On the one hand, to intervene at the physical level constitutes the annihilation of the Same (i.e., the destruction of the operational identity of a system) while, on the other, intervention at the level of ideology requires a prior—ontologically speaking—transformation in selves.

⁴⁰ Here, I am leaving open the question as to how much of our everyday experience actually is intentional. But if intentionality is understood as a subject-oriented-towards-object, then mounting evidence suggests that most of our embodied life does not encounter the world *qua* object structure (dualism). I suspect that the Husserlian conception of intentionality is ultimately a reconstructive interpretation of experience expressing the standpoint of the contemplative mode from which the interpretation is made. The interpretation of experience is necessarily a second-order exercise that has already detached from a first-order experience, whose meaning is being retrieved from the past via the process of interpretation. As James and Nishida would argue, the standpoint of interpretation is one experience putting itself in relation to a second experience, which thereby becomes the content of the interpretive standpoint (i.e., what the interpretation is *about*). The interpretation, then, is the relating of the two. In short, the intentional relation may always be a relation towards a specious present.

power of opening up the economy of self-sameness. Genuine openness, then, is not a subjective act of will, but a gift from the Other; it does not precede our encounter with alterity, but is something realized in the encounter: openness without difference is merely a formal pretense.

Iris Murdoch's discussion of reorientation and attention in *The Sovereignty of Good* suggests a sense of what cultivation vis-à-vis alterity means for the self. In particular, she observes that modifications in the attachments of the self cannot be realized by sheer force of will, but only by significant and cultivated shifts in attention. Rather than a simple negating of the will, "it is the acquiring of new objects of attention and thus of new energies as a result of refocusing."⁴¹ If Murdoch is correct, then cultivation of the Same cannot be performed by self-negation ("self-power"), but demands a positive relating towards the Other ("Other-power"). Attending to the alterity of experience initiates a conversion (Tanabe's *zange* 懺悔) of the Same: "What is needed is a reorientation which will provide an energy of a *different kind*, from a *different source*" (italics mine; *SG* 55). Interestingly, Murdoch emphasizes the fact that the transformation of the Same depends on a source of energy outside of itself—a different energy. This source of difference and novelty is the critical presence of the Other, which has the power to reorient us in relation to our projects.⁴² The Other provokes us, drawing us outside of ourselves, and thereby is a real source of the Same's edification.

⁴¹ Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*. New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1971, 56; hereafter indicated as "SG."

⁴² In view of Murdoch's conception of reorientation, this passage from Fromm's *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* takes on a new level of significance: "What is usually overlooked is the fact that there is a different kind of stimulus, one that *stimulates the person to be active*. Such an activating stimulus could be a novel, a poem, an idea, a landscape, music, or a loved person. None of these stimuli produce a simple response; they invite you, as it were, to respond by actively and sympathetically relating yourself to them; by becoming actively *interested*, seeing and discovering

One of the consequences of cultivation understood as “striving to face the incomprehensible” is that this turning-towards alterity is in and of itself sufficient, which is to say that it is *not* a “turning-towards-in-order-to,” which would constitute a subordination of the discipline to the identity of the Same. Like Dôgen’s “just-sitting,” it needs to be a *just* turning-towards. To attend to alterity for the sake of some other purpose is not to attend to alterity, but to reinforce the Same’s habit of moving through and past alterity. It is crucial that the alterity of the Other defines the proper end of our turning, namely, that the very structure of our phenomenological orientation towards alterity takes the Other as an “end-in-itself.” From the standpoint of an ethics of alterity, the experience of alterity *is* the disclosure of the Other as morally considerable.

In addition to a propensity to slip into the isolation of our own egonomy, the transpersonal phenomena of consumerism, nationalism, colonialism, globalization, etc., also represent modalities of the Same severing our connection with difference. While it is possible to argue that these various modalities can be reduced to the categories of the One, the Herd, the They, and technicity, the very desire to effect this reduction would be but another manifestation of the logic of identity. More importantly, however, the differences that distinguish these various modalities of the Same are crucial for resisting the Same, because each of these ideological-practices suppresses the encounter with alterity in a

ever-new aspects in your “object” (which ceases to be a mere “object”), by becoming more awake and more aware. You do not remain the passive object upon which the stimulus acts, to whose melody your body has to dance, as it were; instead you express your own faculties by being related to the world; you become active and productive. The simple stimulus produces a *drive*—i.e., the person is driven by it; the activating stimulus results in a *striving*—i.e., the person is actively striving for a goal” (AHD 269). Thus, the critical presence of the Other should not be understood as a merely negative presence, but also as a *stimulating presence*. In this respect, it would be worth considering further the relationship between Fromm’s claim about “becoming more awake and more aware” in the presence of the Other and Levinas’s comparable claims about vigilance and awakening.

distinct manner.⁴³ While there is no question that they reinforce each other at multiple levels of insinuation, effective resistance must also be cognizant of their specific points of influence: the joints of power. Thus, from a practical standpoint, a critical part of cultivating our relation to alterity involves cultivating our attentiveness to the insinuation of the Same from different directions.

Postmodern discourse reflects a concerted effort on the part of intellectuals of various stripes to expose and challenge these points of infiltration. While such macroscopic analyses are undoubtedly important for placing critical pressure at the systemic levels of the Same's functioning, these discourses have a tendency to collapse at the practical level—too often into a vapid form of “political correctness.” The point here is that without a cultivated sensitivity to alterity at the micro-level of first-person experience, these systemic critiques lack any real ethical purchase on living practices and day-to-day encounters with the Other. Theory rings hollow if it is not mobilizing concrete experience. Thus, we need to move beyond the refinement of theory to the concerted practice of authenticating alterity in our everyday lives.

As individuals, as manifestations of singularity, we must cultivate our sensitivity towards alterity by disciplining our listening for and awakening to the alterity of Other persons as well as to the alterity of nature, objects, and our selves. This cultivation requires a continual disruption of the ideological-practices of the Same and, at the phenomenological level, a breaking from the “objective attitude” of managing a pre-understood world and inhabiting an abbreviated world of universals, rather than the dense and complex world of singularity.

⁴³ Due to a certain discomfort in separating ideology from practice, the use of “ideological-practice” is an attempt to hold the related concepts together. In one sense, it can be read as virtually synonymous with Foucault's notion of “power-knowledge.”

This managerial standpoint reflects a particular interpretation of ourselves as practical beings, which is not to deny that we are practical beings, but to challenge this specific conception of "practical."⁴⁴ In the wake of practicality, we have fashioned a cultivated blindness to particularity for the sake of increased convenience and expediency. With his characteristic eloquence, William James makes this point beautifully in "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings":

Yet so blind and dead does the clamor of our own practical interests make us to all other things, that it seems almost as if it were necessary to become worthless as a practical being, if one is to hope to attain to any breadth the insight into the impersonal world of worth as such, to have any perception of life's meaning on a large objective scale.⁴⁵

In order to further illustrate his point, James points to Walt Whitman as exemplifying the relationship between the rejection of practical life (Whitman as "loafer"), on the one side, and insight into the profound significance of the workaday world (Whitman as "poet"), on the other. Hence, one way of separating an ethics of alterity from a conventional conception of ethics is that it demands a shift away from the question of *doing* the right thing (practical reason) to an emphasis on putting myself in the right relation (intimate orientation) vis-à-vis the Other.

⁴⁴ The current conception of "practical" is nothing but a synonym for instrumental reason. Ultimately then, "practical" has become shorthand for being *individualistic* and, because the desires of the individual define the field of relevance, temporally *shortsighted*. Hence, it has become bizarrely "practical" to systematically degrade our environment for the sake of the endless parade of consumer goods that everyone (at least in the "First World") must have, but which no one really wants or needs.

⁴⁵ William James, *The Writings of William James*. A Comprehensive Edition. Ed. John J. McDermott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, 637; hereafter indicated as "WWJ."

6.6.1 A Halo of Nothingness and the Other's *Original Face*

As noted above, an ethics of alterity cannot be an ethics prescribed from a third-person perspective, but must be thoroughly phenomenological in its structure. Hence, it does not theorize from a "meta" position regulating interaction between generalized Others, but strives to confront the alterity of concrete Others from the ineluctable standpoint of the Same. Any move towards an objective perspective is an attempt at emptying the Same of its concreteness and therefore a corresponding emptying of the Other's concreteness. The reciprocity of this emptying, however, is never fulfilled: the Same-Other relation is not an equation that permits an equal subtraction on either side. Against this objectivist tendency to lift the Other out of the phenomenological relation, it is necessary to preserve the orientation to the face of the Other at the theoretical-conceptual level.

The Buddhist figure of "original face" (*honrai no memmoku* 本来の面目) offers an expedient trope, an *upâya*, for denoting (1) the normatively enriched experience of the Other emerging from cultivation and (2) the correlative easing of the assertive powers of the Same.⁴⁶ At its figurative level, the adjective "original" invokes the incomprehensible—the halo of nothingness surrounding the face—towards which cultivation strives, while at the same time invoking the figure of the "face," which has become the thematic focus of contemporary analyses concerning alterity. Indeed, it is due to the symbolic intersection of foregrounded presence (face) with a background of incomprehensibility (originality) that the "original face" has become a familiar image in

⁴⁶ The character for *hon* 本 is based on the radical for "tree" with the bottom line indicating the ground and the source of the tree below the ground (i.e., the roots). It therefore expresses "origin," but in a naturalistic rather than metaphysical sense. The character, *rai* 来, simply means "to come" or "to return." Hence, *honrai* means "original" in the sense of "returning to one's source or roots."

kôans and “capping-phrases” (*agyô* 下語; *jakugo* 著語).⁴⁷ And thirdly, it has the unique advantage of implying a *cultivated* relation to the Other, that is, an altered relation wherein an intimate (ethical) relationship is realized: one that is fundamentally constitutive of the identities of the relata.

The Buddhist concept of original face describes the self as situated in horizons of emptiness and nothingness. In other words, the original self is fundamentally situated within alterity, thus Otherness is, from this perspective, not something opposing the self, but something constitutive of the self. The Buddhist stress on emptiness and nothingness represents a thoroughgoing rejection of metaphysical reduction, and thus a commitment to the maximal background of faciality against which the original face shows up. Dependent co-origination as comprehensive relationality and ontological intimacy reveals the Other as standing out against a far-reaching horizon of alterity. Hence, the original face indicates a dramatic experience of the halo surrounding the Other, namely, the moral considerability of the Other. To encounter original face is to encounter the emptiness and nothingness of the self; and, correlatively, to encounter the original face of Others. It is to achieve a radical turning-towards the incomprehensible and therefore, a radical alteration of the self: the authentication of the self as emptiness, nothingness, or Otherness. The language of “one’s own original face” in Buddhist discourse is deliberately paradoxical, because original face is synonymous with no-self.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ According to Kenneth Kraft: “A Zen capping phrase is something of a cross between a koan and a footnote. Applied to live situations as well as written texts, a capping phrase is supposed to be able to make a comment, resolve a specific conundrum, convey a Zen insight, transform another’s awareness, resonate like a line of poetry, or perform several of these functions simultaneously” (EZ 5).

⁴⁸ This is precisely why the use of a definite article, or forging an article at all, is more appropriate than a possessive pronoun when referring to original face.

In *A Study of Dôgen*, Masao Abe connects the experience of one's original face with the realization of a profound reorientation and a corresponding realization of naturalness:

Right here we see Dôgen's view of *naturalness (jinen)*, which is expressed as follows: "You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words, and following after speech, and learn the backward step that turns your light inwardly to illuminate your self. Body and mind of themselves will naturally drop away, and your original face will be manifest" (*SD* 159).

In this passage quoted by Abe from *Fukanzazengi*, Dôgen describes the reorientation as "the backward step" that provokes the emergence of naturalness and one's original face. This step is backward in the sense that it is a step away from the self and towards the alterity of emptiness. In exactly the same sense, "striving to face the incomprehensible" is an orientation towards alterity that is also an orienting away from the egocentricity of the self. For the Buddhists, turning towards alterity is a breaking of the grip of the Same (i.e., self-attachment).

In a concrete terms, the meditative practice of *zazen* is an intense Other-directedness vis-à-vis the content of awareness, which is intended to sever the assertiveness of the Same that is directly manifested in the Same's chasing after a world of self-referential relevance in the continuous flux of experience. Indeed, as a systematic and dramatic confrontation with impermanence, *zazen*, quite literally, puts the Same in its place.⁴⁹ Dôgen's talk of naturalness refers to the dissolution of an internalist conception of the self—the self is now distributed across its situation—and a description of the resultant quality of skillful coping that attends these more robust conceptions of self, Other, situation, intelligence, and efficacy. The Same is no longer presupposed in experience and

⁴⁹ In this sense, then, such practices enact the cultivation of a "radical" passivity.

practice as the center around which the world is located, but has become contextualized as a moment within a boundless field of impermanence.

6.6.2 *Prajñā* (“wisdom”), *Karunā* (“compassion”), and Moral Skill

In the first chapter, I challenged the Socratic identification of knowledge and the good based on the privilege accorded epistemology as *grounding* the good. In contrast to definitional knowledge, however, the Socratic conception of wisdom is predicated on humility, namely, the capacity to recognize the limits of one’s knowledge. From this standpoint, it becomes possible to realize a deeper affinity between wisdom and goodness in relation to an ethics of alterity. However, the correlativity of wisdom and compassion in the Buddhist tradition offers a superior paradigm from which to think an ethics of alterity. The Buddhist perspective presents a more promising standpoint because the tight coupling of wisdom and compassion exhibits the structure of a skill, namely, an embodied knowing wherein the development of insight and the development of activity are essentially indistinguishable. As a skill, the correlativity of *prajñā* and *karunā* moves away from the prejudices of an intellectualist paradigm, with its exclusive focus on abstract moral reasoning, and reveals a perspective capable of more fully addressing the animating concerns of this study.

Firstly, skill possesses a thoroughly normative structure, but unlike the normativity of representations, its normative structure presupposes *situated involvement* rather than distance. Secondly, as non-conceptual and non-representational, skill presumes an *intimate appreciation of particularity* and a refined capacity to discriminate relevant

differences.⁵⁰ Moreover, assessments of relevance are rooted in pragmatic commitments developed and attuned in accordance with actual success strategies, rather than in theoretical commitments reflecting an overly abstract, formal, and impoverished conception of human agency. Thirdly, skill relocates intelligence, efficacy, and ultimately the self *in the world*, and thus as already implicated in alterity and intimately situated with the Other.

6.6.3 The Normativity of Skill:

To describe an act as skillful is to say something normative. It is to make a normative claim concerning the realization of an optimal interaction between an agent and a domain. Moreover, this normativity of skill is transitive in relation to its constituent moments, which is to say that a skillful act is skillful all the way down. It presupposes a skillful development of perception and a skillful development of activity throughout the process of an act's development.⁵¹ In terms of our traditional philosophical vocabulary, the relevant sense of perception can therefore be further qualified as *intelligent* perception, while the relevant sense of action can be further qualified as *successful* action. But even these further specifications are, at bottom, question-begging, since they simply push

⁵⁰ Again, the relevant sense of "non-representational" concerns higher-order modes of representation and symbolic systems that "stand-in-for" the particular. This does not preclude representation as "construal" or simple "aboutness," nor does it discount the probability that basic biological processes involved in sensory input, for example, may be able to be viewed as representational. But even here, the notion of representation is quite weak, because the significance of the representation does not exist independent from the participation of that sensory subsystem in an environment and in a larger neurobiological situation.

⁵¹ While it can be the case that temporary local breakdowns may occur within a given skillful act, the global development of a skillful act must still exhibit an intrinsic sense of necessity. This is the difference between a successful act being perceived as an outcome of contingency, namely, a lucky act, versus a successful act being perceived as the outcome of purposive perceptual activity, namely, a skillful act.

normativity back into the concepts of intelligence and success without adequately clarifying the source of normativity.

If we press on intelligence and success a bit harder, however, the analysis of normativity returns us once again to the structure of *aboutness* or *directedness*. Simply put, the normative structure of a skillful act resembles the normative structure of representation, which is to say that competent actions realize their purported directedness, while incompetent actions fail to fulfill their directedness. Normativity is to be found in the movement from here to there, in the advance from initial-state to target-state, and, most importantly, in the relation between the Same and the Other.

Beyond this initial binary distinction between competent and incompetent actions, skill implies finer discriminations concerning “better” and “worse” competence. These finer distinctions are a consequence of the fact that better “movements” realize their aboutness in a manner that is qualitatively different from worse movements.⁵² This qualitative dimension of the development of directedness is captured in the adjectives used to describe the aesthetic quality of the movement. Optimal movements are graceful, smooth, timely, and proportionate, while sub-optimal movements are clumsy, stilted, untimely, and disproportionate. In short, optimal movements reveal a kind of efficiency that sub-optimal movements lack. The problem of normativity, then, is the problem of what constitutes the *sense* of optimal efficiency. But once again, one might well ask whether casting the normative structure of skill in terms of efficiency contributes anything substantive to our understanding, or is it simply another instance of question begging?

⁵² The language of “movement” is being used as a general way of speaking about the development of an orientation from initial-state to goal-state, and therefore, it should not be read in an overly restrictive sense as referring solely to *physical* movement.

If we set aside the technocratic connotations of the term for the moment, the advantage of asking about efficiency is that it inevitably leads to an interrogation of the *domain* of action, particularly in terms of the constraints and opportunities contained therein.⁵³ In evaluating efficiency, one's attention must pull back from a myopic agent-centered view of action and pose broader questions about the relationship between agent and situation. In order to fully grasp the importance of contextual involvement in skill, however, it is necessary to get clearer about the ontology of skill and skill-acquisition.

6.6.4 The Ontology of Skill:

The strong correlativity of *prajñā* and *karuṇā* suggests that compassion is a way of perceiving the world (wisdom), while wisdom develops within the intimacy of relating towards Others (compassion). Within an *enactive* conception of cognition, all intelligence is ultimately rooted in perceptually-guided action (i.e., Nishida's "action-intuition").⁵⁴

Skillful coping describes a purposive activity that is not guided by an explicitly represented goal; rather, the directedness of skill stems from the deep internalization of past success and failure. Through the pairing of sensori-motor responses with successful and unsuccessful outcomes, skillful activity aims at the future on the basis of being attuned to the past.⁵⁵ The more refined and differentiated our sensori-motor responses are vis-à-vis

⁵³ "Efficiency" is being used here as a shorthand for concepts such as grace, smoothness, timeliness, proportionality, etc.

⁵⁴ Again, the language of "enaction" is specifically the language of Francisco Varela. While Nishida's conception of "action-intuition" is close to Varela's concept of "enaction," the advantage of using Varela's terminology concerns clarity, namely, it emerges against the background of a well-articulated philosophy of mind and possesses a great deal of contemporary currency within cognitive science.

⁵⁵ According to the account of skill acquisition presented by Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus in "What is Moral Maturity? A Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Expertise," emotional responses such as elation, frustration, and despair help define and strengthen the pairing of success and failure outcomes in relation to strategies of sensori-motor response. In other words, our embodied memory of what works depends on our intense emotional involvement: we need to care

differing situations, the more sensitive one becomes with respect to the particularity of a situation and the more likely one will be able to successfully cope with its uniqueness.

In *Ethical Know-How*, Francisco Varela contends that “[w]e have a readiness to action proper to every specific lived situation” (EKH 9). He refers to our “readiness-for-action” in relation to particular sensori-motor response as a “*microidentity*” and “its corresponding lived situation [as] a *microworld*” (EKH 10). Skill, therefore, consists of embodying a rich repertoire of microidentities capable of successfully coping with a wide array of microworlds. Indeed, for Varela, “appropriate action” is, quite simply, “how we embody a stream of recurrent microworld transitions” (EKH 10). Through the tight coupling of agency and environment, or microidentities and microworlds, we cultivate a facility for immediate and transparently coping with our world. In the language of Shigenori Nagatomo, this coupling of microidentity with microworld is the “attuning” of the personal body in relation to its ambiance through the adaptive process of “sedimentation.”⁵⁶ This is not to say that our response to a given situation is determined by blind habit; to the contrary, it is to stress that such habituation to our lived world is not *blind*, but adaptively *attuned*. Skill is a cultivated comportment, an intelligent awareness of our ambiance, and a poised knowing of the body that stretches further than the mouth can tell.

In their paper “What is Moral Maturity? A Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Expertise,” Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus lay out a helpful framework for analyzing skill-acquisition. According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus, we begin as a *novice*,

about success and failure, from <<http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/papers.html>>; hereafter indicated as “MM.”

⁵⁶ Nagatomo, Shigenori, *Attunement Through the Body*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992, 217.

which is characterized by our reliance on abstract rules and context-free features that are meaningful without the benefit of experience. At the level of an *advanced beginner*, the student begins to notice “perspicuous examples of meaningful additional components of the situation” (MM 4-5). Now, rather than hard and fast rules, the advanced beginner begins to rely on more flexible maxims, which “presuppose experience in the skill domain” (MM 5). At the level of *competence*, the practitioner commits to a stance that helps to order the relevance of the task environment and simplify its informational density. On the one side, the practitioner exhibits a distanced strategic relation towards the task, while on the other, the practitioner is emotionally implicated in the result of her action: “we find a common pattern: detached planning, conscious assessment of elements that are salient with respect to the plan, and analytical rule-guided choice of action, followed by an emotionally involved experience of the outcome” (MM 6). At this point, competence reflects the last stage of situational detachment, which if it is not overcome will cause the practitioner to plateau at the level of competency, but if transcended, opens into *proficiency*. For Dreyfus and Dreyfus, it is “the gripping, holistic experiences from the competent stage” that allow for a non-deliberative proficiency in which the practitioner no longer tries to impose a strategy, but rather responds “naturally” to the inherent guidance presented in the situation:

Having experienced many emotion laden situations, chosen plans in each, and having obtained vivid, emotional demonstrations of the adequacy or inadequacy of the plan, the performer involved in the world of the skill ‘notices,’ or ‘is struck by’ a certain plan, goal or perspective (MM 7).

Finally, *expertise* reflects a strong coupling of agent and situation wherein abstract planning has completely given way to spontaneous and transparent coping: “the beginner develops into an expert who sees intuitively what to do without applying rules and making

judgments at all" (MM 9). What becomes particularly clear in this analysis of skill-acquisition is that "intelligence" and "agency" becomes increasingly distributed into the environment as an integral aspect of the cultivation of expertise. The expert is moved by a situation that is already compelling, which is to say the expert realizes *agentless action* (*wuwei*) that is highly sensitive and naturally responsive to the subtlest differences in the task environment. To make the point quite differently, the expert has a cultivated a qualitatively different order of *sincerity* vis-à-vis her ambiance.

6.6.5 The Epistemology of Skill:

Varela notes that our capacity for immediate coping as a form of responsive intelligence is the consequence of a long evolutionary development, especially when compared to the relatively late emergence of discursive and symbolic modes of reasoning. On these same grounds, Nietzsche also criticizes our imprudent reliance on ratiocination: "[c]onsciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence also what is most unfinished and unstrong" (GS §11). Pointing to this evolutionary primacy of "knowing-how" over "knowing-that" does not mean that "higher order" reasoning is not important, but it is to recognize that deliberation is a consequence of the breakdown of spontaneous coping. As such, deliberation represents a deficient mode of skillfulness. Indeed, Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus suggest that even the transition to deliberation in breakdown situations continues to rely on intelligent construals of the situation that are meaningfully guided by a history of skillful coping:

[...] in familiar but problematic situations, rather than standing back and applying abstract principles, the expert deliberates about the appropriateness of his intuitions. Common as this form of deliberation is, little has been written about such buttressing of intuitive understanding, probably because detached, principle based, deliberation is often incorrectly seen as the only alternative to intuition (MM 15-16).

In general, the epistemological value of skill does not turn on with whether it is more original than deliberative cognition, but on its specific capacities for accommodating difference when compared to abstract moral reasoning.

A chronic problem of ethical reasoning concerns the fact that the representation of a moral situation is ordered by abstract universal principles, which predetermine the kinds of things that count as salient features of a "moral situation."⁵⁷ Due to the nature of these principles and their hermeneutic centrality, however, the subsequent construal of the moral situation is often exceedingly *thin*. This propensity towards such thin understandings represents the "hermeneutic problem" of ethical reasoning. The overall inadequacy of moral rules in relation to the hermeneutic problem can be traced to three basic deficiencies.

Firstly, the generality characteristic of moral rules/principles is carried over into the construal of the situation, thereby tending to oversimplify or falsify it. Secondly, these moral principles are inclined to presuppose a restrictive conception of agency predicated on a crude internalist account of "will" and "intelligence"—inadequate conceptions of human intelligence often buttress commitments to the absolute centrality of moral reasoning. In other words, the poverty of the philosophical anthropology and philosophy of mind presumed by such moral principles cannot help but impoverish the disclosure of a given situation, since what is taken to be relevant is established on the basis of a caricature. The third aspect of the hermeneutic problem is not a concern about philosophical anthropology, but an "existentialist" concern about the theoretical standpoint itself. To put something of a different spin on an earlier point, the objectivist

⁵⁷ The main exception to this rule may be Aristotelianism, which is precisely why virtue ethics is at the centre of the debate about moral particularism and moral universalism.

ideal of theorization necessarily represents moral situations from a third-person perspective that cannot account for the inherent *orientation* of the lifeworld. Any concrete moral situation is always oriented across a number of axes, and these orientations not only contain information as to what one *should* do, but also what one *can* do. The failure to include such axes of orientation in one's representation is, at bottom, to misrepresent a situation. In general, the focus on moral rules leads to a basic neglect of lived ambiance, which is precisely what needs to be captured by any *thick* description.⁵⁸ Indeed, it is all too clear that traditional ethical approaches have presumed that attention to situation, that is, the particularity of conditions, presents a *threat* to ethical realization. The concrete detail of a situation has been viewed as either obfuscating the "underlying" moral principle or tempting reason away from the purity of its detachment: the world is the source of confusion or sin. Kant's position, as one might expect, represents the strongest rejection of contingency, which he viewed as the source of heteronomous action and the corruption of human dignity as a "rational being." It is not surprising then, that Kant's ethics has often been criticized for being formalistic and empty.

Contrary to the dominant tradition, which has opposed the confused particularity of context with the pure universality of reason, moral skill locates efficacy as inherent in the context of action. Indeed, moral skill requires a direct and intimate engagement with the concrete situation of action, which is what provides the motivating "reason" for acting: "Actions such as these do not spring from judgment and reasoning, but from an *immediate coping* with what is confronting us. We can only say we do such things because the

⁵⁸ In "Particularity and Principle," Garfield offers a succinct summary of notion of thickness: "the 'thickness' of the morally relevant descriptions of actions: their saturation with cultural and social meanings which render them non-transportable from context to context" (MP 180). The *locus classicus* for the distinction between "thick" and "thin" distinctions is Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

situation brought forth the actions from us" (*EKH* 5). Within the framework of moral skill, rationality and morality are not opposed to contingency; instead, genuine rationality and morality consist in the capacity to respond appropriately and successfully to contingency. Because of the ingrained assumptions of the tradition, however, it is necessary to specify that responding to contingency means responding to *opportunities* as well as *impediments*. Since will and intelligence have been held to be self-contained faculties, contingency has been seen as opposing the constancy of the self, rather than as an enabling condition for the possibility of the self. The supposed naturalness of this opposition demonstrates, once again, the logic of antagonism underlying the Same's relation towards exteriority.

The knowledge inherent in moral skill is embodied and largely non-conceptual in its intentionality. In other words, moral skill is definitely about the world, but it is not about the world in a manner that is mediated primarily through the concept. From a concern about alterity and the totalizing function of the concept, moral skill offers a more accommodating way of engaging the Other.⁵⁹ In addition to being non-conceptual and non-representational, moral skill occupies a more accommodating relation towards difference.

While moral reasoning and skill both demand consistency, their relative conceptions of consistency are quite different. Whereas moral deliberation is based on a deductive model of consistency that is quite strict and thus quite "hobgoblin-esque" from an Emersonian perspective, skillful coping is predicated on analogical consistency: "like

⁵⁹ As stated earlier, "the concept" is, in and of itself, a form of totalization. Consequently, postmodern anxieties about the totalitarian function of the concept ought to be redirected towards questions of conceptual deployment. Concepts do not just sit still; they are used towards certain ends. Certain deployments may undermine totalization, while others may reinforce it. In either case, concepts work together. Foucault has taught us that concepts occur within discursive practices alongside other concepts and alongside other discourses, which entails that concerns about totalization ultimately need to look beyond the concept.

responses to like situations.” While this analogical model of consistency is inherently more vague, its vagueness is productive because it is a consequence of the fact that analogical consistency depends on pattern recognition, which is fundamentally holistic rather than rule-governed.⁶⁰ Consequently, analogical consistency is resistant to being decomposed into singular properties that can then be analyzed piecemeal in order to reconstruct the relevant similarities and differences determining the analogical “inference.” On the contrary, *gestalt*-based pattern recognition is irreducibly holistic, precisely because sameness and difference get their relevance in relation to the whole.

The basis of analogical consistency does not exist in a logical principle like the “law of non-contradiction,” but emerges out of experience. Indeed, the importance of practice in skill-acquisition stems from the need for meaningful contact with a broad array of experience. It is precisely through an expanded variety of experience that one refines situation-response patterning and learns to differentiate relevant similarities and relevant differences. Intimate interaction rather than distanced detachment constitutes the basis of moral skill, which correlates well with a central claim of this study, namely that the Other is not compromised by relation but, on the contrary, the experience of alterity emerges in and through interaction.

Notice that on this account moral action depends as much on difference as it does on sameness. Moreover, the ability to discriminate between relevant similarities and differences is pragmatically rooted in a history of consequences. Whereas the assignment

⁶⁰ Dreyfus and Dreyfus write: “This is not because it is difficult to determine which features define membership in the right similarity set, nor because it is hard to find the principles which lead to expert action. Rather, as far as anyone knows, there just aren’t any such features and principles. It is an unsubstantiated assumption of philosophers since Socrates that there must be a theory underlying every skill domain, while the failure of rule-based expert systems, based on the assumption that expertise is produced by principles and inferences, suggests that there is no such theory, (and the failure of case-based expert systems suggests there are no such features)” (MM 13).

of relevance in moral deliberation is predominantly guided by commitments to abstract principles, which may or may not effectively represent the world, the discerning of relevance in moral skill is guided by an intelligent awareness shaped directly by a concrete history of success and failure. To put the point somewhat differently, the expert's capacity to effectively construe a given situation has emerged in constant contact with real constraints imposed by the world, whereas the theoretician's representations of a situation are imposed on the basis of theoretical coherence and consistency. To be sure, it does not make sense to collapse the difference between how things are (or have been) and how they ought to be, but the implementation of any ideal requires meaningful contact with the actual.⁶¹ And meaningful contact with the actual depends on being oriented in the world on the basis of a history. As Varela points out, "knowledge is about situatedness" and the productive "uniqueness of [a] knowledge" based on "historicity and context" (*EKH* 7). Moral skill is a unique knowledge originating from a unique history and directed towards a unique world. For Varela, this is precisely why the *Vajrayana* tradition of Mahâyâna Buddhism speaks of "crazy wisdom": "Truly expert people act from extended inclinations, not from precepts, and thus transcend the limitations inherent in a repertoire of purely habitual responses. This is why truly ethical behavior may sometimes seem unfathomable to the untrained eye" (*EKH* 31). While it might appear that the existence of crazy wisdom undermines the possibility of accountability, this is not the case. Implicit in Varela's claim that such ethical actions may "seem unfathomable to the untrained eye" is that crazy wisdom is understandable for another Bodhisattva (i.e., moral expert). In a similar vein, Dreyfus and Dreyfus write:

⁶¹ In *An Inquiry Into the Good*, Nishida argues for the ultimate identity of knowledge and volition precisely on these grounds, see pp 11-29.

since various experts have different past experiences, there is no reason why they should finally agree. The most that can be claimed for universalization is that, given the shared *Sittlichkeit* underlying their expertise, two experts, even when they do not agree, should be able to understand and appreciate each other's decisions. This is as near as expert ethical judgments can or need come to impartiality and universality (MM 17).

It is precisely because of its emphasis on moral skill that Buddhism has emphasized the (analogical) continuity of their *expert history* through concerns about patriarchal lineage, master-disciple transmission, and sutra study.⁶²

6.6.6 The Ethics of Skill:

I would like to begin this section by reiterating Nishida's contention that wisdom [i.e., skillful coping] "means to obey that which transcends us and causes us to be what we are, and to do so in the volitional, or dynamic, form of the contradictory identity of objectivity and subjectivity. [...] Moral behavior is grounded in it" (italics mine, LW 102). In this passage, "that which transcends us" is our situation, and our capacity to extend our grasp of our situation is, according to Nishida, nothing less than our capacity to develop as individuals. Indeed, for Nishida, the standpoint of the religious perspective has nothing to do with religious belief; instead, it concerns one's concrete realization of the absolute situation (*basho*) of nothingness (i.e., impermanence, non-essentiality, and dependent co-origination). Morality, then, consists in attuning to the *basho* of alterity in which we find ourselves.

From an analytical standpoint, a focus on skill reveals that normativity includes primitive constitutive commitments concerning basic understandings of the field of

⁶² Indeed, despite a certain ambivalence with language and texts as representations of experience, Buddhism takes the history of its experiences extremely seriously. Even in Zen, sutras, *kōans*, capping-phrases, and poetry functions, in a complex way, as a concrete history against which contemporary practice and cultivation is to gather its bearing.

involvement. These constitutive commitments provide the requisite constraints for sufficiently determining the sense of efficiency and, subsequently, the sense of normativity. In other words, changes in these constitutive commitments produce dramatic changes in the sense of efficiency, namely, what constitutes a skillful fulfillment of directedness.

While it is possible to pursue regional ontologies with respect to specific constitutive commitments, it is primarily those constitutive commitments shaping our ground level understanding of the world and thereby those shared across skill-sets that are of ultimate importance. For example, even a cursory examination of instrumental reason reveals that it exemplifies a conception of efficiency determined by constitutive commitments that project the intelligibility of the world-domain in terms of *discrete entities*. Simply put, instrumental reason presupposes a world comprised of individual objects with determinate and intrinsically located identities. Self-interested rationality, then, is simply an expression of these constitutive commitments as they bear on the self, namely, the self as the most important discrete object in a field of discrete objects. From an ethical standpoint, instrumental reason and self-interested rationality construe the domain of involvement in terms of individuality, and therefore as a field of competing interests, thus securing the basis for presupposing a Same-Other antagonism.⁶³ Consequently, the history of modern ethics can be largely read as an attempt to maximize efficiency by minimizing the direct conflicts between Same-Other interests, i.e., justice as an ideal of preserving discreteness (i.e., mutual indifference).

In contrast, the East Asian sensibility, as exemplified by the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist thinkers presented in this study, has approached the world in light of constitutive

⁶³ Actually, it is not only the theoretical basis for the presumption of Same-Other hostility, but because belief affects action, this understanding becomes the actual basis for the reality of Same-Other opposition.

commitments to *relationality*. As a result, Asian perspectives have understood efficiency in terms of *global harmonization*, rather than in terms of *individual realization*. In short, the focus on harmonization implies a form of Other-directedness that is constitutionally Other-regarding, which differs sharply from the Other-directedness of justice. Indeed, the Bodhisattva ideal exemplifies this fundamental intersection of individual realization and Other realization: "Nothingness in Buddhism is 'self-benefit-benefiting-others.'"⁶⁴ It is precisely due to the fact that these East Asian philosophical traditions have been predicated on constitutive commitments to relationality and harmony (viz., to the place of the self as differentially related to situation) that Confucianism, Daoism, and East Asian Buddhism have viewed the cultivation of moral skill—which in its very structure is defined by relationality and harmonization vis-à-vis a domain—as the heart of ethics.

Moral skill is, at bottom, a performance of harmonization, i.e., of attunement, between an agent and a domain. Moral skill is rooted in our *situated involvement with the Other*, which means that its point of departure is not an isolated, abstracted Other, but the Other as contextually extended in the greater situation. Since the cultivated sense of the Other is one that perceives the Other as radically externalized *qua* original face, one's understanding of the Other does not depend on divining inwardness, but on attending to the context shaping that inwardness.

Clearly human finitude precludes intimate involvement with each and every Other, but if one takes relationality seriously, then moral response no longer needs to be seen as simply locatable in terms of benefiting this or that Other. Instead, moral response, which gains its focus and particularly efficacy in relation to specific Others, is simultaneously

⁶⁴ Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. Trans. Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990, 122.

directed towards the transformation of the context in which we all find ourselves. Again, this is why the Bodhisattva's project is aimed at saving all sentient beings—it is about a radical revolution of the context in which we find ourselves. The Buddhist focus on *karma* is a recognition of the fact that moral actions are also personal, namely locally-directed at this or that particular Other, and transpersonal, namely, globally-directed at transforming *our situation*. Hence, enacting the Pure Land is nothing other than benefiting a single individual, while benefiting this individual is an enactment of the Pure Land.⁶⁵ This is not to say that one is indifferent to the particularity of the Other, but rather it is to acknowledge that the particularity of this situation is constitutive of the particularity of this Other. Involvement, then, is guided by contingency, the particular unfolding of our situation, rather than by principle—one seeks and awaits opportunities for appropriate and well-timed interventions. Moreover, from the standpoint of moral skill, the capacity for seeing an opportunity for moral response is not something distinct from one's capacity for effective moral response. In other words, *prajñā* is *karunā* and *karunā* is *prajñā*.

In addition, the authoritative dimension of expertise is never detached from a community, namely, there is always a social dimension of expertise that renders it accountable. Master chess players and master musicians, for example, understand each other through a shared intimacy with the domain in which they exercise their skills. This shared intelligibility is important, because it gives expertise a meaningful exteriority: the critical presence of the Other in addition to the critique of the real. Moreover, experts continue to depend on the difference of Others, which is to say that the continual cultivation of expertise relies on teachers, coaches, and other experts. And even when

⁶⁵ The Buddhist image of the "Pure Land" provides a useful trope for conceiving of ethics as a "project" or "process" that is without completion.

these Others are not as skilled, their heterotopic view on an expert's skill can positively contribute to further refinement.

This role of the Other in skill-acquisition and skill-refinement also recalls a claim about "social intentionality" raised in §3.6. In the context of discussing Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm, I suggested that our seeing with the Other is not simply a matter of "seeing the same object," but also a question about "seeing *more* than one could otherwise." In short, with the Other, I see differently. The phenomenological basis of the claim is that perception can gain a heightened intensity alongside the Other. The Other can not only provoke *vigilance* in relation to herself, but can also *awaken* a deeper involvement in experience. Indeed, the common lament in the wake of the Other's absence: "It wasn't the same without you," can be understood, quite literally. This does not mean that the object of experience is different when viewed alone, but that the experience of the object is different. The lateral participation of the Other in our seeing motivates and enhances our experience: we notice things and take joy in things to which we would otherwise be blind.⁶⁶ Beyond this intentional modification, the Other can always redirect our attention verbally. In both cases, the Other cracks open the isolation of our egoism and can move us towards solidarity. Finally, in light of the notion of cultivation discussed above, our "striving to face the incomprehensible" not only aims at future production of solidarity, but it also emerges out of a history of solidarity. In other words, my experience of the alterity of the Other can be meaningfully disciplined by the

⁶⁶ If this is true, then the notion of social intentionality provides a further "Sartrean" proof that the Other can effect a fundamental modification in my being. However, unlike Sartre's examples, this "refutation of solipsism" is not based on a confrontational relation to the Other.

presence of a third Other. The moral skill of the Other, therefore, can guide and develop the advance of my own moral skill.⁶⁷

6.7 Summary: An Inconceivable Devotion to Others

Some of you are, perhaps, more livingly aware than you were an hour ago of the depths of worth that lie around you, hid in alien lives. [...] You divine in the world about you matter for a little more humility on your own part, and tolerance, reverence, and love for others.⁶⁸

From a practical standpoint, an ethics of alterity is inconceivable. Our moral obligations concerning how to act correctly towards the Other is always preceded by the primary question of moral disclosure—the revelation of the Other as morally considerable. Moral disclosure, therefore, is the most original obligation to which all other moral obligations refer. As a result, responsibility becomes a commitment towards cultivating attention to alterity, namely, of “striving to face the inconceivable.” Ethics demands our *devotion* to the Other as the condition for the possibility of being responsible to alterity.

But we find ourselves in a dense world of Others. Hence, our devotion to the Other means that we discover ourselves amidst an infinite halo of alterity (i.e., an unlimited field of obligation), but with a finite capacity unable to respond to each and every Other. In short, the alterity of the world is overwhelming, which means that the obligation belonging to an ethics of alterity is always *excessive*. Our limited capacities to act can never satisfy the immeasurable depth of the “ought” that disciplines us, which is to say that the sense of *I must* will always outstrip the sense of *I can*. In their “inconceivability,” the Bodhisattva Vows explicitly attest to this radical excess of moral

⁶⁷ N.B., the moral skill of the Other constitutes part of the situation towards which one attunes a particular skill.

⁶⁸ Cited from the essay, “What Makes Life Significant.” James, William. *The Writings of William James*. A Comprehensive Edition. Ed. John J. McDermott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, 658.

obligation. However, the recognition of this excess is by no means a refutation: finitude is not an excuse that justifies closing ourselves off from alterity, but a constraint disciplining our openness and our responsiveness in view of our specific talents, skills, resources, and opportunities to act.

The project of the Bodhisattva, as offering a model, is not guided by a selfish desire to be free of obligation, but by a compassionate desire to benefit the Other. Hence, the Bodhisattva does not resent the immensity of her task, but discovers her freedom in the existential orientation provided by the Vows. An ethics of alterity, therefore, is not directed towards completion and finality, but endorses an ongoing process, namely, a persistent devotion to intimacy and solidarity. In the face of this surplus of obligation, our moral responses must labour towards *altering* the entire situation in which the Other stands. To put it differently, one's finitude gathers its significance in the project of working towards the "Pure Land."⁶⁹ Ethics is an orientation towards this *utopia* as the other of every place and the proper place of every Other. The interminable process of ethics as unshakable Other-directedness and Other-centeredness, as the going to and returning from the Pure Land, aims at the transformative disclosure of alterity through our unrelenting devotion to the Other, the incessant actualization of ethical relationships, and an impossible commitment to enacting an inconceivable world.

⁶⁹ In his essay, "On Death in Bloch's Thought," Levinas considers Ernst Bloch's conception of labor in relation to utopia: "He shows this by evoking the privileged moments in which the obscurity of the subject is traversed by a ray, coming as if from the utopian future. There, a place is left for 'the consciousness of the glory of the utopia in man.' Bloch calls these instants, in which the light of utopia penetrates for an instant into the obscurity of the subject, *astonishment*" from Levinas, Emmanuel, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 40. What interests Levinas is the religiosity of *astonishment* (i.e., hope) in relation to the *not yet* (i.e., non being) of a future utopia. In a similar fashion, it is wonder before alterity that motivates the project/process of constituting the "Pure Land" within an ethics of alterity.

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