

## **RICOEUR BETWEEN LEVINAS AND HEIDEGGER: ANOTHER'S FURTHER ALTERITY**

The possibility of extending philosophy at the heart of today's postmodern conversation involves seemingly disparate conversationalists. On the one hand, Levinas, whose later works have been central to many postmodern deconstructive discussions, especially those focused on ethics, proposes a radical alterity of the Other, death, and time. This alterity, however, cannot be voided of the ethical relation, as most deconstructive approaches attempt, without great loss in the conversation. On the other hand, Heidegger's work, often used today as a whipping post, and coming from the other direction, offers an account of coexistence, death, and time which Levinas radically opposes. We must confront this opposition to Heidegger in order to see to what extent Heidegger's thinking is reducible, as Levinas contends, to the same and to totality. In the context of this opposition, I consider Ricoeur's thinking to be in a position between Levinas and Heidegger, not merely as an eclectic one, but rather, one that follows his usual fruitful fashion of going the distance with each thinker, exposing his limits, and then appropriating each adjusted position in an interarticulation that becomes his own unique and ingeniously inclusive position, one which often gets too little attention among those who consider themselves today's avant garde.

My thesis in this study is complex: first, that focusing on the respective critiques of Heidegger by both Levinas and Ricoeur allows us explicitly to see their differences; that seeing these, we can move to relate them more clearly; and finally that we can come to understand, in the light of pursuing these differences, a final position which consists in somewhat adjusting Ricoeur's position enlightened by a rereading of Levinas. Before this final position emerges, however, I will test the contention of Kemp,<sup>1</sup> that Ricoeur is somewhat between Heidegger and

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<sup>1</sup> See: Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas: Original Affirmation Between Ontological Attestation and Ethical Injunction," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 21, 1995.

showing that it is precisely only as transcendent that the Other is Other and not me; just as I am solitary and not the other: "the other is in no way another myself, participating with me in a common existence."<sup>2</sup> Yet, in any consideration of Levinas in the context of Ricoeur's critique, it is necessary to explicitly point out that Levinas finds a place for sympathy and pairing even though he rejects them as ultimately constitutive of the intersubjective relationship,<sup>3</sup> a point that Ricoeur seems to miss. Levinas says: "The other is known through sympathy, as another (my)self, as the alter ego....But already, in the very heart of the relationship with the other that characterizes our social life, alterity appears as a nonreciprocal relationship – that is, as contrasting strongly with contemporaneousness. The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity."<sup>4</sup> We see Levinas here developing the extreme separation between the exteriority of the Other and the solitude of the existent, which later becomes the focus throughout the whole of *Totality and Infinity*.<sup>5</sup> At this point we have seen explicitly the two sides of the double critique of Heidegger, that of the solitude of the existent and that of the Alterity of the separate Other. We have seen a twofold separation emerge in Levinas' treatment of totality and infinity: a separation of the personal Other from the intentional horizon of human existence; and the separation of the existent in his/her singular solitude from existence. In addition to what has been seen above, Levinas' critique of Heidegger's early basic ontological difference is also at the heart of the above double critique.

The fundamental critique of the ontological difference comes to light when Levinas indicates that for Heidegger the distinction between Being [*Sein*] and a being [*Seiende* or *Seiendes*] is a distinction while for him it is a separation. For Heidegger, the two are always together, with existing always grasped in the existent and that existing is "always possessed by someone. I do not think Heidegger can admit

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<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, translated by Richard A. Cohen, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Cohen, footnote 63, p. 83 of Levinas, *Time and the Other*.

<sup>4</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

ethical 'principle,' the Heideggerian perspective belongs to a tradition the barbarous depths of which were shown by Nazism. When Heidegger criticizes the essence of technology, he forgets that the source of modern evil, such as it was manifested in Nazism, is found at a depth that lies deeper than the realm of technology. Alluding to certain expressions found in Heidegger's later works, Levinas sketches the portrait of a pagan existence rooted in mother earth and prone to exploitation – very different from the sober existence of availability for the needs of others. The individual are immersed in the *physis* that encompasses them like elements of its unfolding. "<sup>9</sup>

Related to the above critique regarding the failure to get out of subjectivity is Levinas' critique of Heidegger's view of time in relation to ekstasis, which does not break out of the subjectivity of Dasein. Perhaps, I might add, the closest the later Heidegger comes to such a breakout is the time of Being which is somewhat independent of Dasein and is emitted in events. But this still misses essentially what Levinas is indicating, even though it could be claimed that the time of the other person appears somewhat on the horizon of worldly time, ecstatic temporality.<sup>10</sup> It is here that one can see Levinas' critique of the Heideggerian Being toward death, for Levinas considers death to be an alterity related to time. For Heidegger, death is the possibility of no longer having possibilities, or the impossibility of possibility.<sup>11</sup> What strikes Levinas about Heidegger's account of death is that it shatters "inauthentic possibilities"<sup>12</sup> rather than existence itself. For Levinas, rather, "Death in Heidegger is an event of freedom, whereas for me the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suffering. It finds itself enchained, overwhelmed, and in some way passive."<sup>13</sup> For Levinas, Heidegger does not go far enough regarding time. Levinas considers time as radical alterity connected to the alterity of the Other. But this alterity of time of the Other is not simultaneous with the time

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<sup>9</sup> Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University, 1993), p. 54.-55. For a very fine treatment of this element of Heidegger, where he in his later work is seen to shuck off any trace of the Judeo-Christian tradition in favor of the pagan Greek and German traditions, as Peperzak states here so well, see John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing of Heidegger*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. Cohen, Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, Introduction to *Time and the Other*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, pp. 70-71.

Ricoeur's critique of Levinas' lack of reciprocity for the ethical relation. He states that: "The morality of 'earthly nourishments' is the first morality, the first abnegation. It is not the last, but one must pass through it."<sup>17</sup> And it is this notion of nourishment which is at the heart of this critique of Heidegger regarding enjoyment, for Levinas contends that "prior to being a system of tools, the world is an ensemble of nourishments. Human life in the world does not go beyond the objects that fulfill it....These are the nourishments characteristic of our existence in the world. It is an ecstatic existence – being outside oneself – but limited by the object."<sup>18</sup> And it is precisely this relation with an object that Levinas wants to characterize as enjoyment [*jouissance*] as a way of being prior to the ready-to-hand. I will now turn to Ricoeur's critiques of Heidegger's thought, which is not as extreme as that of Levinas, in order to integrate the two critiques into a viable position emerging from the fundamental insight of both Ricoeur and Levinas.

It can be seen that Ricoeur's fundamental critique of Heidegger in *Oneself as Another* prerequisites the earlier critiques made years ago.<sup>19</sup> Although Ricoeur has been critical of Heidegger from the beginning of his work decades ago, even before it was fashionable to criticize him, he employs far more of Heidegger's analyses than Levinas.<sup>20</sup> The points of his critiques which interest me for our present discussion are those complex and central remarks in the essay "Existence and Hermeneutics" and remarks in *Fallible Man*<sup>21</sup> and *Time*

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<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel, *Time and the Other*, pp. 63-64. Cohen tells us in a footnote to this text of Levinas also develops the notion of enjoyment in *Existence and Existents*, pp. 37-45; *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 127- 139, 143-151; and *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 72-74. See also R. Cohen, "emmanuel Levinas; Happiness is Sensational Time," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 25, no. 3 (fall 1981), pp. 196-203.

<sup>18</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *Conflict of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Edited by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>20</sup> I do not mean here to imply that Levinas has less respect for Heidegger than Ricoeur, for his famous statements about Heidegger being one of the five great philosophers throughout the ages cannot be forgotten, nor his contention that one must encounter in depth Heidegger's thought in order to surpass it. Levinas' entire effort is tied to this surpassing of Heidegger's initial ontology and later thought of Being, not that Heidegger is the only thinker with this profound an influence on Levinas in his attempt to account for the transcendence to the Infinite Other. One need only to remember his critiques of Husserl, as well as his espousal of Rosencranz.

<sup>21</sup> *Paul Ricoeur, Fallible Man*, translated by Charles A. Kelbley (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965), especially p. 67.

intimacy between the inquirer and the Being of the inquirer. Ricoeur does not want to jeopardize the advantage of his longer way, that it dwells on the ontic level in order to resolve the conflicts and to solve problems often overlooked in attempting to trace the most direct route to the question of Being. Ricoeur's basic objections to Heidegger's short way, as mentioned above, is that it too quickly reaches a unity of Dasein which Ricoeur does not consider to be forthcoming, and which remains for him problematical in that the unity of man is a regulative idea and not one that an ontology of Dasein can reveal.<sup>25</sup>

Ricoeur emphasizes the conflict of interpretations as revealing differing aspects of existence which ontically found various hermeneutic methods.<sup>26</sup> Further, on this ontic level and in an extended ethics, he has focused pointedly upon the problem of the place of evil in freedom within human existence and upon the ontic relation of human existence to the Sacred which is central to his whole philosophy. Thus, for Ricoeur, pausing to dwell on the ontic has fostered an integration or a dialectizing of the symbols which support a phenomenology of spirit and a psychoanalysis of desire, with their respective orientations to teleology and to archeology, both of which prepare for the relation to the Sacred within a phenomenology of religion and its eschatology. These advantages of the long way for Ricoeur militate against Heidegger's short way.

The fundamental justification of the long way over the short way to ontology is the underlying difference in the fore-comprehension of human existence. For Ricoeur, as mentioned, the unity of man as a regulative idea can not be achieved in existence and is not easily accessible to an ontology worked out too quickly. He says: "moreover, it is only in a conflict of rival hermeneutics that we perceive something

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<sup>25</sup> It can be admitted at this point that perhaps Ricoeur stresses too much the broken aspect of human being and the truncated dimension of human existence. His account, especially the later ones, do ring true. Further Heidegger shows the advantage of passing to the originary level in an ontology which provides a more comprehensive and foundational unity below the broken existence which supports the conflict of hermeneutics of existence which has preoccupied Ricoeur for so long. Heidegger, however, as will be seen, has had to lop off the entire Kantian reason and the infinite, as well as the function of understanding in relation to such a reason driven to totality, completeness and the unconditioned. Thus, although Heidegger is useful in helping to get Ricoeur from fixating on his earlier interpretation of the existential role of evil, Ricoeur, even in his later somewhat mitigated appropriation of Kant's view of the tendency to the good and the proclivity to evil, can not ever go the distance with Heidegger's diminished role of Kantian reason.

<sup>26</sup> Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," pp. 6-11.

productive imagination in affording schemata for the rules of understanding, and the extension of this function.

This broadened ethics, later to be seen as not incompatible with Levinas' ethics, is understood as a philosophy that leads from alienation to freedom and beatitude, attempting to grasp the "effort to exist in its desire to be,"<sup>28</sup> and opposing any reduction of reflection to a simple critique or to a mere "justification of science and duty as a reappropriation of our effort to exist; epistemology is only a part of this broader task: we have to recover the act of existing, the positing of the self, in all the density of its works."<sup>29</sup> Hence, it can be seen that Ricoeur has corrected Kant's view of the place of evil in freedom. He has, however, considered the locus of evil to stem from the disproportion in the synthesis between finitude and infinitude on the theoretical, practical, and especially affective levels which come to expression in the fullness of symbolic language. It is from the symbols of evil that thought reaches the notion of the servile will or the will in bondage. We have seen, then, that the advantages of the "long way" militate against the Heideggerian "short way. For, although his work on hermeneutics of existence and on the conflict of interpretations seems to flounder in dwelling on the ontic level before reaching the promised land of ontology, the resolution of the conflict indicates the importance of considering the ontic level further than Heidegger does.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, at the very outset, Ricoeur has challenged Heidegger's view of the explicitly temporal unification of Dasein's Being as care. Here, with the consideration of the conflicts in interpreting existence, Ricoeur's two objections to Heidegger's short way converge. For differing methods of interpretation are rooted in the different and polemically synthesized dimensions of human existence which they respectively reveal. Now, it can be seen that this earlier twofold critique of Heidegger must be integrated with Ricoeur's own later critiques regarding the comprehension of Being and with Levinas' critique regarding the need for the injunction of the face to face and

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, translated by Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation*, p. 19. He says: "Moreover, it is only in a conflict of rival hermeneutics that we perceive something of the being to be interpreted: a unified ontology is as inaccessible to our method as a separate ontology. Rather, in every instance each hermeneutics discovers the aspect of existence which finds it as a method."

see that historical or human time, with its three connectors, the calendar, the sequence of generations, and the trace, all constitute historical time "through which we join not only our predecessors, contemporaries and successors, but also the universe and cosmological time."<sup>32</sup> Thus, Ricoeur's criticism, which begins by reproaching Heidegger for wanting to derive an understanding of history from an understanding of Dasein's existence, ends in reproaching Heidegger for an incapacity to think historical time itself. We must turn to Ricoeur's fuller critique of Heidegger's category of temporality.

Ricoeur's strongest articulation of the critique of the phenomenology of time comes to grips with the primordial time of Heidegger. This critique of Heidegger's limitations regarding time is a serious one which cannot be ignored, in spite of the fact that Ricoeur extols the achievements of *Being and Time*, that is, that the principle of temporalization is sought out within the structure of care which allows for distinguishing time on different levels. Nevertheless, even with its levels of temporalization, Heidegger's treatment of time reveals most completely an inability to incorporate a certain sense of time. For, it is from Kant that we learned that time as such is invisible, that it could not appear in any living experience, that it is always presupposed as the condition of experience, and from this fact could only appear indirectly on objects apprehended in space and according to the schemata and the categories of objectivity. According to Ricoeur, it is this constraint which shows why even the internal time-consciousness borrows its structure from this objective time that the reduction holds in suspense. And even Heidegger's inclusion of the levels of temporalization fall before this objection: "But this very effort comes up against *the other* of phenomenological time: the 'popular' concept of time, made up of an infinite series of indifferent nows. Even the most decentered level of temporality - within-time-ness - where the 'in' of being in time is highlighted, never rejoins the 'ordinary' time which is simply removed from the phenomenological field by the allegation of an enigmatic leveling of the 'in' of 'within-time-ness'."<sup>33</sup> Ricoeur considers Heidegger's attempt to include the history of time from Aristotle to Hegel in this ordinary time to be in vain. For Ricoeur, there is a

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas:" p. 47.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 29, No. 4/4, (Winter, 1985), p. 262. For Ricoeur's lengthy treatment and critique of Heidegger on Temporality, see: *Time and Narrative*, Vol. III, pp. 60-96.

hermeneutics, especially concerning that which is not reducible to care. The primordial relation of Dasein to Being is inadequate to deal with the otherness of cosmic time and of texts.

Further, for Heidegger, the drive for Being within his hermeneutical situatedness and the absolute status of the Being-Question constitutive of Dasein lead Heidegger further into a pitfall regarding history. In the *Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur turns against "the manner in which Heidegger opposes all other ontologies by confining them inside the bounds of 'the' metaphysical."<sup>35</sup> Continuing with Kemp, we see that "This 'destruction of metaphysics' signifies in Ricoeur's eyes an 'unacceptable claim...[to put] an end to the history of being,'<sup>36</sup> a claim which is no more legitimate than the Hegelian attempt to demonstrate the closing of history."<sup>37</sup> Rather than support such a destruction or, today, deconstruction, of metaphysics, Ricoeur asks: "Which resources of ontology are capable of being reawakened, liberated and regenerated by coming in touch with a phenomenology of self?"<sup>38</sup> One can see in this criticism of Heidegger's destruction of the history of metaphysics a latent critique of historical time.

Now that we have seen the fundamental critiques made by both Levinas and Ricoeur of Heidegger, we can now contrast them with a view toward bringing their differing ethical orientations together, and in the process, see if situating Ricoeur between Levinas and Heidegger allows for a further development of his position in the light of that of Levinas. We have seen that Levinas reveals a twofold separation which Heidegger does not develop: the separation between communal existence or coexistence (*mitsein*) and the singularity and solitude of the existing existent; and the separation between the Other and Being-in-the-world. Taking into account Ricoeur's critiques of Heidegger, we can see first that Ricoeur's insistence on remaining on the ontic level gives initial philosophical focus a basic affinity with that of Levinas, for the ethical relation emphasized by Levinas takes place between to

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<sup>35</sup> See: Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 48. The focus of our discussion here is from the end of the *Rule of Metaphor*: Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, sj, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), especially p. 311.

<sup>36</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 48; Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p., 312.

<sup>37</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas." P. 49 .



that Levinas does so. Ricoeur does seem to include the singularity in the face to face, but the question as posed leaves open the extent to which he has explicitly incorporated it.

In the context of Ricoeur's own conviction of the priority of the ethical over the moral, Levinas's language of summons and injunction seems already too moral in a way similar to Kant in relation to Aristotle: i.e., the ethical is the foundation of the moral, and the injunction, duty and the law should not arise on the ethical horizon too soon. Ricoeur delves below moral duty to find a latent "ethical sense" which can be invoked in cases of "undecidable matters of conscience".<sup>39</sup> It must be remembered that Ricoeur, in the Seventh and Eighth Studies of *Oneself as Another*, polarizes Aristotelian ethics of virtue and Kantian morality of obligation, showing all the while the more fundamental dimension of the ethical aiming at or seeking of the good life. It is clear, then, why solicitude of the ethical is presupposed for the injunction: the critique of Kant in the Eighth Study could well be applied to Levinas, that the injunction is invoked too soon, even with the substitution of the face and the infinite for the Kantian pure rational moral law. Thus, in this present context, it is clear why Ricoeur shows that Levinas needs the ability to respond and the ability for some kind of reciprocity based on solicitude, which itself is caught up in seeking the good life or human good. But one has to admit that, in defense of Levinas, even Ricoeur has recognized the basic dimension of the face to face for ethics. And earlier in *Oneself as Another*, before confronting the position of Levinas, Ricoeur has already laid bare the notion of self-esteem latent within and intrinsic to the ethical aiming at the good life, from which he now extracts, or within which he interprets, a basic solicitude having the status of a "benevolent spontaneity."<sup>40</sup> Such benevolent spontaneity is the bases of a receiving at the same level as being called to responsibility in acting in accordance with justice, which is presupposed by any response of responsibility. This reciprocity, or receiving and reaching, is not the same as the equality of friendship, but it does compensate for the dissymmetry. Although the whole of the Aristotelian framework eventually comes to light in reflection as the prerequired framework for morality, it does not necessarily get the first focus within a

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 190.

<sup>40</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 190.

moral situation one might first begin with the transcendence of the "face to face," this beginning does not supply an adequate foundation for ethical life, which has transpired at a basic level long before this reflection catches it in the act, so to speak. And this is precisely where Ricoeur incorporates a quasi Aristotelian teleological dimension into the ethicomoral situation. And while Ricoeur might want to add this to Levinas, and rightly so, it can be found that in the context of totality, Levinas has already to some extent included the situation which makes the "face to face" possible within totality.

Retaining Levinas' responsibility within Ricoeur's ethicomoral integration allows Ricoeur's place of receptivity to be integrated with an element of Levinas' view of totality, the latent exteriority. But this must preclude any subordination of Levinas's exteriority of the face and infinity to the totality, which he so consistently and rigorously avoids, and which would falsify or remove precisely the uniqueness of his view of alterity. In accepting the role of solicitude in human existence, Ricoeur has developed a place within interiority that really allows a response to the face of the Other. And in doing so, he has accounted for a central, indeed, the central point of Levinas, that a breakthrough--a break out-- of the "totality" of traditional philosophy is necessary for there to be a face to face encounter. This is precisely what Ricoeur has done in interarticulating the two movements of Heidegger and Levinas.<sup>43</sup> And incorporating this alterity of the Other is not entirely alien to Ricoeur's previous work, for he has encountered it in his consideration of the alterity of cosmic time, as seen above. So too here, the exteriority of the Other is outside the domain of the Heideggerian world, and of Levinas' totality. This is precisely the element of Levinas which must not be jeopardized in our present expansion of Levinas's view in order to clarify how a relation is possible within interiority. And, I dare say, Ricoeur seems to want to embrace this face to face in indicating it as the place where ethics really begins. And it is precisely in accepting the alterity of the Other that he has taken a positive element in agreement with Levinas, a point which even deconstruction likes. But this affinity with deconstruction cannot be exaggerated, for, in this context of even a mitigated deconstruction, Levinas' account of the ethical relation is lost to the deconstructive process, so that what remains is only the obligation of deconstructing. And nothing of

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<sup>43</sup> It may be worth mentioning that the opposition Ricoeur draws is between Levinas and Husserl, and it is within this context that Heidegger comes into the discussion.