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LEVINAS'S AGAPEISTIC METAPHYSICS OF MORALS

Absolute Passivity and the Other as Eschatological Hierophany

John J. Davenport

ABSTRACT

This article evaluates Emmanuel Levinas's novel "ethical metaphysics" of interpersonal relations from a religious perspective. Levinas presents a unique version of agape ethics that can be evaluated in terms of a number of the dilemmas that have traditionally attended Christian discussions of neighbor-love. Because Levinas's analysis makes our responsibility for other persons depend on their eschatological significance, it has the same problems that hamper all theories of neighbor-love that lack a sufficient role for reciprocity.

KEY WORDS: *agape, Derrida, eschatology, ethics, Levinas, Outka, Ricoeur*

EMMANUEL LEVINAS'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE OTHER as infinite alterity has become perhaps the most influential inspiration for new ethical thought in continental philosophy. Levinas's call to "the Face" is a revolution: it redresses the apparent solipsism of existentialism's focus on individual freedom (see Levinas 1979/1987d, 79); it replaces the *gelassenheit* of pure Heideggerian "ek-sistence" in the openness of Being with concrete human relations; and it saves us from Friedrich Nietzsche's autocratic rejection of ethical care in favor of blind will to power. As Richard Cohen says, for Levinas "[h]umanity arises in moral responsibility, and moral responsibility is inaugurated by overturning the self's *conatus*, its 'perseverance in being,' . . . or, as Nietzsche would have, it, its aggrandizing interests" (Cohen 1996, 4). The distance between the visions of Levinas and Nietzsche can be emphasized by focusing on the fact that Levinas's analysis of the face-to-face relation constitutes a radical agape ethics of responsibility for others: "The

An early version of this paper was read at the October 1996 meeting of the Society for Phenomenological and Existential Philosophy (SPEP) at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. I would like express my thanks for the thoughtful comments of two anonymous referees at the *Journal of Religious Ethics*.

Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility." (Levinas 1989, 83).¹

This is agape as "first philosophy," the primordial level of significance prior to both cognitive concept-application and universal ontology. Thus, in Levinas's account, higher than logical conditions of any kind. Thus, in Levinas's account, higher than and before the existential structures of the *being* of Dasein stands the *existentiel*, or what Martin Heidegger identifies as the process of living the ontic possibilities of human existence (Heidegger 1962, ¶4, H12-13, 33-34). This absolute *existentiel* level of significance, freed by Levinas from conditioning by the existential, is discovered in a "metaphysical desire" for what is different (Levinas 1961/1969, 33), as distinct from a "need" that anticipates a complement or constructs its object as filling some absence in the agent: "Desire" in this unfamiliar sense is instead a projective movement that takes the *I* in its ipseity out of itself toward the "absolutely other," toward the "infinity" that is "characteristic of a transcendent being as transcendent" (Levinas 1961/1969, 49).

Yet the originality and profundity of this phenomenology of the Other ought not to cause us to overlook fundamental difficulties in Levinas's ethics arising from his central claim that the self is completely passive in the original relation to others that is the beginning of moral responsibility. Writers generally sympathetic to Levinas have already indicated some of these problems. For example, Ed Wingenchach has argued that Levinas's account of the "substitution" of the *I* for the Other in *Otherwise than Being* differs in one essential respect from liberating *mitsein* in Heidegger: "The passivity and inequality of [Levinasian] substitution simply cannot be read into Heidegger" (Wingenchach 1996, 35). On this point, he notes Druilla Cornell's observation that "[t]his very absolute-ness tends both to prevent Levinasian ethics from allowing action on behalf of the Other and to reduce alterity to sameness by positing an absolute distance" between persons (1996, 54, citing Cornell 1992). My three-part critique of Levinas is closely related to this concern, but different in focus.

1. In the first two sections, I will argue that Levinas understands the primary relation of interhuman responsibility in agapeistic terms.² Levinas's descriptions of the face-to-face relation resonate in several

¹ However, for some novel (though debatable) comparisons of Levinas and Nietzsche, see Schroeder 1996, 129-47.

² Martin Buber, whose work influenced Levinas considerably, also thought of his inter-human "I-Thou" relation in terms ultimately derived from the neighbor-love commands of the Torah, as I hope to show in a later paper.

ways with the traditional theme of neighbor-love. But the radically self-renouncing conception of agape on which Levinas models his metaphysics of responsibility is one we have good reasons to reject: as Gene Outka and others have argued, this conception misconstrues the self-regard and need for integrity necessary for neighbor-love, and it incorrectly infers from the unconditionality of our duty to love that agape cannot include appeals for reciprocal respect and relations of universal justice.

2. In section 3, I will then argue that despite qualifications which are meant to show that the self is liberated into self-sufficiency and freedom by its ethical relation to the Other, Levinas is clear that all active intrapersonal relation of the *I* to itself is *derivative* from its superlatively passive relation of being owned by (or appropriated to) the Other's Face. As comparisons with Jean-Paul Sartre's metaphysics will make clear, the "exteriority" of this absolute passivity is conceived on the analogy of the *in-itself*. In this light, however, there appears to be a problematic circularity in Levinas's metaphysical account of the ethical call of responsibility on which our personhood depends.

3. Finally, section 4 will show that the "infinity" in the Face that binds us to the Other is an eschatological infinity and that Levinas cannot without circularity avoid reducing the ethical to the eschatological. As a result, the individual distinctness of the Other is inadvertently lost because the alterity of the Other, which resists every possible form of cognitive reincorporation by the subject, is, for Levinas, revealed exclusively in an infinity that is the trace of eschatological divinity. Thus, others in their particularity are missed, overlooked, or (more accurately) *looked through*: they become a pure hierophany of the sacred, a window onto an eschatological infinite, or an opening through which I pass out of myself in encountering the Good "beyond essence" as the Absolute *Anstoss*. Thus, the alterity of each other person becomes a revelation of eschatological divinity that is indistinguishable in every case.

These three problems all result from the absolute passivity of the self in its ordinary relation to the Other. Together, they imply that the face-to-face relation cannot serve as the basis for the agapistic "generosity" toward the Other that Levinas intends. I can care for the Other, rather than looking through her, only if I am *not* entirely passive in my ordinary relation to her. Levinas says, "The proximity of a neighbor is my responsibility for him; to approach is to be one's brother's keeper," echoing a line from Genesis that is the beginning of the love teachings

running throughout the Torah and prophetic books,³ but he immediately adds that "to be one's brother's keeper is to be his hostage" (Levinas 1987a, 168). Levinas uses this figure to suggest the categorical force of the imperative in responsibility, but like an arbitrary divine command, it leaves no room for my autonomous adoption of this duty to keep and preserve the Other. Against this construal, it turns out that only if I am not totally hostage, only if I am at least partially active in being essentially related to the Other (even prior to cognition and judgment), can I approach him without either violently determining or overlooking him, allowing him to be *my* Other and yet to remain a human brother rather than modulating into pure alterity as such.

These tensions inherent in Levinas's position have often been overlooked, in part because Levinas's "heterology" (as he calls it, instead of "ontology") has not been seen as an attempt to articulate an agapeistic metaphysics of moral duty. This is not to say that Levinas's work can or should be read *only* through the lens of the agape ethics tradition, but comparing Levinas's ethics with other theories of agape allows us not only to evaluate Levinas's moral vision from the perspective of a wider company from which it is too often abstracted, but also to gain some critical distance from his own system of terms and notions. Interpreting Levinas in this context will also help clarify a set of basic dilemmas that any adequate account of agape must address. This essay thus has a double purpose: to enrich our understanding of Levinas's contribution to ethics while clarifying its weak points, and, having learned from Levinas's insights and difficulties, to provide a framework or propaedeutic that can guide future work on the nature and grounds of the moral imperative of neighbor-love.

1. The Face, the Neighbor, and Agape

It will doubtless be protested that Levinas's ethics is meant as a phenomenological metaphysics and is nothing like the sort of theology with which the term "agape" is associated. I acknowledge that Levinas does not focus on constructing an agape *theory* of ethics. However, it would be difficult to maintain that he constantly invokes the Hebrew categories of the *neighbor* and the *stranger*—with their unmistakable allusion to the love commandments in the Torah—*only* for what they can contribute figuratively to a characterization of transcendence and a pre-ethic level of significance and temporality prior to all conscious intentionality.

³ The theme of *keeping or preserving*, which figures so strongly in Heidegger's essay on "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," is also closely related to the idea of neighbor-love. See Heidegger 1971, 145–61.

While Levinas's goal is phenomenological and while familiar theologues of neighbor-love do not interpret it *metaphysically* as either a non-conditional condition⁴ or as the first principle of a new phenomenology beyond the transcendental ego and its horizon of Being, this only implies that Levinas's philosophy *radicalizes* the role and interpretation of agape. For Levinas, our unchosen origin in an openness to the vulnerability of the Other, to the invocation in their Face, can usefully be understood as a condition of *protogape*, which alone makes possible such distinct moral attitudes as charity and malice: "Every love or every hatred of a neighbor as a reflected attitude presupposes this prior vulnerability" (Levinas 1987c, 146–47). The face-to-face is a protogapeistic relation that is "presupposed in all human relationships" (Levinas 1982/1985, 89).

1.1 *Agape and protogape*

In theology, agape usually refers to a voluntary state of motivation on behalf of others' interests and well-being; by contrast, the original "being-for-the-other" that Levinas describes as the basic structure of "the being of man" (Levinas 1994a, 159) is an involuntary responsibility for others, which remains the basis for "the very identity of the human I," whether it is accepted or refused (Levinas 1982/1985, 101). This original "ethical relation" is not a chosen or contingent attribute of particular persons, but an openness-to-alterity that is built into our subjective interiority from its beginning, forming the *existentiel* ground of all our possible interpersonal attitudes. It might therefore seem better to compare Levinas's ethical relation to the *duty* of agape, rather than to any voluntary state of neighbor-love.

⁴ Importantly, some of Levinas's predecessors in France in the 1940s and 1950s did interpret agape metaphysically as nonoptional. Albert Pie's collection *Love of Our Neighbor* (1955) includes the original version of Paul Ricoeur's "The Socrates and the Neighbor" and Michael Ledoux's "A Philosophy of Relation to Others." Ledoux's essay anticipates Levinas in many respects. Although he begins with Hegel's conception of relations and Heidegger's authenticity, Ledoux argues that since the person's yearning for completion cannot be fulfilled intrapersonally, "he must open himself to others." This is not a mere luxury, a matter of choice. . . . I am bound to others, I cleave to them with every fibre of my being. . . . My relation to others, my love for them, are therefore matters of necessity. They are also the conditions and the measures of my own being. We do not possess ourselves first in order subsequently to give ourselves out of a kind of gratuitous superabundance. . . . On the contrary, I exist precisely in so far as I am open to others, in relation to others. . . ." (Pie 1955, 104). Thus there is a kind of "love" which is not freely chosen but instead is constitutive of personhood for Ledoux. Although Levinas's formulation is more complex, this example shows that in the post-Hegelian milieu of French thought, close links between the problem of other minds and the theme of agape were familiar.

Yet the point of calling this a "protogagaepistic" concern for others is not only that in the Levinasian relation the self finds something like agape (or careful response to others) to be automatically required of it, but also that the structure of our access to others in this ordinary relation is already *formally similar* to that of positive neighbor-love. Agape is foreign to Greek motivational paradigms because it is not aimed at the agent's own eudaimonia: it is a motive whose ultimate end does not refer to the agent's state, but lies beyond her. Similarly, Levinasian original responsibility "in no wise resembles the intentional relation which in knowledge attaches us to the object" (Levinas 1982/1985, 96–97)—nor any relation in which the character of the object is determined by the mode in which the subject intends it, as in classical phenomenologies. This formal similarity between agape and Levinasian duty motivates Levinas's suggestion that the essential dependence of personal integrity on responsibility for others and for the human "world" in general is a "fundamental non-narcissism" (Levinas 1994a, 161). The Other toward which the agent is oriented is not an "end" in the classical sense at all—that is, it is not a *correlate* that fulfills some deficit in the agent. The relation is nonteleological or "dis-inter-ested" (Levinas 1982/1985, 100).⁵ The end is not "grasped," nor does it become an object or goal purely through its relation to the agent's intending; rather, the agent leaves relation-to-herself behind in going out toward this goal. In sum, in neither agape nor Levinasian duty is the agent's orientation to the Other an intentional relation in the classical sense: in both cases, the agent moves toward an end radically exterior to herself.

We might compare Levinas's protogagaepic original relation to others with Jacques Derrida's account of the "minimal friendship" that must precede any mutual understanding, a protofriendship that is there before any contingent agreement, contact, or initiative between the parties: "a friendship prior to friendships, an ineffaceable, fundamental, and bottomless friendship" (Derrida 1988, 636). As Derrida puts it, with Levinas evidently in mind:

... we are already caught up in a kind of asymmetrical and heteronomical curvatures of the social space, more precisely, in the relation to the Other prior to any organized *socius*, to any determined "government," to any [determined] "law." . . . We are already caught, surprised in a certain responsibility, and the most ineluctable of responsibilities—as if it were

⁵ Levinas splits the word to suggest that the nonteleological orientation involves a relation unlike those terminating in "being" (*est*). The ethical "Face" of the other cannot be grasped or "become a content" in the classical sense: "It is in this that the signification of the face makes its escape from being, as a correlate of knowing" (Levinas 1985, 87). It is in this Husserlian sense of being that the Face is "beyond being."

possible to conceive of a responsibility without freedom. . . . It is assigned to us by the Other, from the Other, before any hope of reappropriation permits us to assume this responsibility in the space of what could be called *autonomy*. This experience is even the one in which the Other appears as such, that is, appears without appearing. That which comes before autonomy must, then, also exceed it [Derrida 1988, 633–34].

This description could serve as a summary of the priority that Levinas gives to the Other over the autonomy of the self: it contrasts sharply with the spontaneity in which a Sartrean for-itself chooses its values. Derrida's summary also helps show why Levinas's "asymmetrical" intersubjectivity should be understood as a kind of *passive, minimal agape*. It involves a distance or "respectful separation" that distinguishes this relation from love in any merely affective sense (Derrida 1988, 640). It is, as Derrida affirms elsewhere, an unusual eros "in which, within the proximity to the other, distance is maintained" (Derrida 1978, 90–91).

1.2 *Metaphysical desire and agape*

In this respectfulness, Levinasian intersubjectivity is distinguished from the incentive of a "need" in the same way that agape was classically distinguished from all forms of eros. As Derrida notes, what Levinas calls "ethico-metaphysical *Desire*," in which the self transcends the circle of its identity "without return," is the opposite of "desire" in the Hegelian sense of inclination (Derrida 1978, 92–93) because it is projected generously or in "enjoyment," rather than reflecting a need to make up some perceived deficiency in the self.⁶ Levinasian *Desire* is nonerotic in the sense that it overflows from the self toward the Other, rather than being motivated by any want that reaches toward objects to satisfy itself. Ethico-metaphysical *Desire* is meant to contrast with such teleological forms of causality, intentionality, or motivation, all of which Levinas considers *violent*: "the fabrication of a thing, the satisfaction of a need, the desire and even the knowledge of an object" are violent in the sense that they use what is anterior as a means for self-satisfaction (Levinas 1990a, 6). By contrast, metaphysical "Desire" is a "movement towards the Other [that], instead of completing me and contenting me, implicates me in a conjuncture which in a way did not concern me," a

⁶ Levinas chooses the term "desire" under the inspiration of Paul Valéry's notion of a "faultless desire" or an "aspiration that is conditioned by no prior lack" (see Levinas 1987b, 94). For a discussion of the connection between metaphysical *Desire* and agape, see Leveyn 1995, 120–23: "Love of a person remains love of a transcendent Other, hence does not allow satisfaction."

movement that was not motivated by my prior vested interests (Levinas 1987b, 94). The self goes out in welcoming response to the Other's Face, rather than appropriating it or violently possessing it: "the vision of the face is not an *experience*" or absorption of objects into the self, "but a moving out of oneself, a contact with another being. . . . The infinite is given only to the moral view: it is not *known* but is in society with us" (Levinas 1990a, 10). Thus, metaphysical Desire is nonviolent. Alluding to Plato's *Symposium*, Levinas affirms that ethical infinity is encountered concretely in "Desire—not a Desire that the possession of the Desirable slakes, but the Desire for the Infinite which the desirable arouses rather than satisfies. A Desire perfectly disinterested—goodness. . . . For the presence before a face, my orientation toward the Other, can lose the avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity" (Levinas 1961/1969, 50).⁷

This formulation parallels the oldest definition of agape as disinterested love, unselfish generosity, as opposed to investment for a return. As Levinas puts it later, the "proximity" or relation of the self *for-the-other* "is a *for* of total gratuity, breaking with interest" (Levinas 1978/1981, 96). He even refers to the responsibility that requires substitution of oneself for another—the sacrifice of subjectivity—as "love without eros" and "a devotedness as strong as death" (Levinas 1987a, 164–65, 167 n. 19). Such a responsibility "to answer for the other is, perhaps, the harsh name of love" (Levinas 1979/1987d, 116). Similarly, near the end of his famous essay "Ethics as First Philosophy," Levinas describes responsibility as "love without concupiscence." He equates this with a "*mauvaise conscience*" not arising from any action or intention—an original guilt that gives us a "capacity to fear injustice more than death, to prefer to suffer [rather] than to commit injustice" (Levinas 1989, 85). Similarly, in commenting on Franz Rosenzweig, Levinas describes "revelation" as an "entering-into-relation completely different than the one that corresponds to a synthesis"; since such a relation is not teleological, it links its terms nonadditively "in a connection for which language or sociality or love is the original metaphor" (Levinas 1988/1994b, 158). In other words, the face-to-face relation has the same structure that Derrida finds in an ideal (or, for him, "impossible") *gift* beyond all economic investment or expectation of payoff (see Caputo 1997, 140–50).

⁷ Compare Levinas 1987a, 163: "But this desire is of another order than the desire involved in hedonist or eudaimonist affectivity and activity, where the desirable is invested, reached, and identified as an objective of need. . . . It is a desire that is beyond satisfaction, and, unlike a need, does not identify a term or an end. This endless desire for what is beyond being is disinterestedness, transcendence—desire for the Good."

Levinas's interpretation of the face-to-face relation thus converges in several ways with the issues at stake in theological discussions of agape. Describing the ordinary relation as protoagapeistic has the advantage of indicating the primacy Levinas accords to the practical, his view that our access to others is *ethically* qualified from the beginning: "I think that access to the face is straightforwardly ethical" (Levinas 1982/1985, 85). As Cohen puts it, "the other *qua* other and moral alterity emerge together: the only genuinely other other is the morally other" (Cohen 1996, 5). The encounter with the Other is "religious" or revelatory, and it thus moves us practically: it is "not structured like knowing—that is, an intentionality" (Levinas 1979/1987d, 31). The alterity or Face of the Other is "what cannot become a content" or object of knowledge (Levinas 1982/1985, 86–87); he adds later that the relation to the Infinite is "not a knowledge, but a Desire" (92). In other words, Levinas follows Martin Buber in construing this original encounter with alterity as something like Immanuel Kant's description of the *factum* of pure practical reason, which is met, but not in a way that gives us theoretical knowledge.

As a result, by appealing to a protoagapeistic form of outwardness as the basis of interpersonal relations, Levinas can distance his position from phenomenological appeals to *empathy* as the basis for consciousness of others. Our openness to the Other precedes all empathetic "transfers of feeling, with which the theorists of original war and egoism explain the birth of generosity" (Levinas 1978/1981, 118). Instead, Levinas wants to model the ordinary interpersonal relation on a notion of generosity that—like agape in the Christian tradition—involves more than empathizing with another person (understanding him as similar to myself) or sustaining a friendship through reference to what I have in common with another. Instead, dialogical response as the "bond established between the same and the other," which Levinas calls "religion" (Levinas 1961/1969, 40) and which is realized in the active saying of language (as opposed to the content said),⁸ is a bond not based on any prior projection of the Other or recognition of oneself in him. Levinas's fear of allowing any reciprocity into ordinary agape stems from his tendency to associate reciprocity with empathy and his supposition that all reciprocity reduces to a *philia* in which others are constructed in our self-image, thereby leveling off the radical alterity that calls us to answer: "[T]he other," he writes, "is in no way another myself, participating with

⁸ Thus Levinas can say, in Kantian fashion, "Reason and language are external to violence. They are the spiritual order. If morality must truly exclude violence, a profound link must join reason, language, and morality" (Levinas 1990a, 7). This opposition to instrumentalism derives from the Buberian and Platonic sense that rational dialogue depends on a real encounter with—and response to—others as *Other*.

me in a common existence. The relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion or sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other's place; we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us" (Levinas 1979/1987d, 75).⁹ In other words, Rousseauian empathy does not give us a sufficient answer to Hobbesian egoism. However, perhaps Levinas's assumption that reciprocity in any form is necessarily narcissistic is itself reductive, unnecessarily constraining reciprocity to the terms of contract theory or Hegelian dialectic.

2. Levinas in the Context of Contemporary Agape Ethics

Given this close relation between Levinas's description of intersubjectivity and the traditional theme of neighbor-love, it will be helpful to consider Levinas's position against the background of contemporary agape ethics as it has been analyzed by Gene Outka in *Agape*. Outka differentiates two main strands, which I will call the self-renunciatory and the reconciliation strands:

The first strand, epitomized by Søren Kierkegaard and Reinhold Niebuhr, emphasizes the infinitude of love (Outka 1972, 15) as a total self-sacrifice, heedless of whether it is effective (1972, 24–36)—a regard owed to all persons *qua* persons, without comparisons or judgment of their particular qualities, actions, or contingent differences (1972, 9–11). This self-renunciatory strand regards friendship, or any relation in which some kind of reciprocity or symmetry is expected, as ethically imperfect or tainted relative to agape. On this interpretation, "agape only has reference to each person taken individually. It is altogether separate from the question of reciprocity (where, that is, some degree of mutual consciousness obtains). Kierkegaard suspects immediately that even an interest in a response reflects self-interested dependence upon particular qualities of objects" (1972, 18). Agape is associated with an absolute self-abnegation that is completely incompatible with any kind of "self-love," which is viewed as "wholly and not just potentially or partly nefarious" (1972, 19).¹⁰ The same idea is apparent in what Colin Grant and Outka have more recently referred to as "altruism" in Anders Nygren's analysis of agape: "By 'altruism' I mean . . . an

⁹ This assumption is also implicit in Levinas's argument that "alterity appears as non-reciprocal relationship" because alterity is lost if "the other is known through sympathy, as another (my)self, as the alter ego" (Levinas 1979/1987d, 83).

¹⁰ Outka takes Kierkegaard to be the paradigm exponent of this conception of agape, although Kierkegaard's interpretation of agape in *Works of Love* is actually much more subtle than this indicates, as Outka notes later in his account.

account of agape that focuses entirely on normative dedication to others. It disallows concern about the self's own well-being as a substantive religious and moral claim along with concern about neighbors. . . . For [Nygren] neighbor-love completely dispossesses and annihilates self-love" (Outka 1996, 35–36).

By contrast, the *reconciliation* strand in agape ethics locates neighbor-love somewhere between the formal symmetry of self-interested parties contracting for mutual advantage and the suspiciously ascetic demand for total self-denial. This interpretation was developed by critics of the first strand who believe that accepting "mutuality" as the *telos*, if not the preliminary condition, for agape need not necessarily imply "an ulterior, acquisitive motive" (Outka 1972, 37).¹¹ Reconciliation agapeism denies that the mutuality involved in friendship "involves a calculation of reciprocal advantages" (1972, 34); likewise, it denies that all self-love is simply egoism or selfishness. In particular, the kind of self-love that is compatible with (or even required for) agape includes "the agent's regard for his own integrity, his endeavor to stay with his own considered insights and commitments" (1972, 35). Along with integrity comes authenticity, which involves a reflexive volitional relation in which a person takes responsibility for the sort of character she wills to be by actively identifying with some of her possible motives for acting while rejecting others (as opposed to acquiring motives passively from everyday public culture).¹²

Authenticity in this sense recalls Heideggerian anticipatory resoluteness in which the self finds "existentiell" unity.¹³ Like Heidegger, then, reconciliation agapeists tend to regard an *intrasubjective* relation of self-unification as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for agape. Reconciliation agapeism thus regards the individual's volitional relation to herself, which is required for self-unification and integrity, as

11 Outka refers, for example, to Daniel Day Williams, M. C. D'Arcy, Paul Tillich, John Burnaby, Jacques Maritain, and even Buber on this side (Outka 1972). Grant refers to D'Arcy and more recent writers, such as Stephen Post, Arthur McGill, Beverly Harrison, and Outka himself as promoters of "the real exchange of mutuality" (Grant 1996, 9).
12 This interpretation of authenticity draws on Harry Frankfurt's notion of identification as an intrapersonal relation established by the higher-order will (see Davenport 1998).

13 In *Being and Time* H344, Heidegger makes this clear: "Dasein's resoluteness towards itself" is the condition for the possibility of liberatory solicitude toward others. Thus, as Heidegger says, resoluteness is "not willful and solipsistic self-assertion but responsible and liberatory co-disclosure in tandem with others" (Wingensch 1996, 41). However, Heidegger gives priority to an *intrapersonal* relation of self-unification and makes it the condition for the ethical relation that Wingensch finds in *Mitseln*. In this respect, contrary to what Wingensch says, Heidegger's account is the inverse of Levinas's.

co-original with her responsibility for others and as a precondition for fulfilling that responsibility.¹⁴

2.1 *Confating self-regard and selfishness*

It seems, then, that Levinas's conception of intersubjectivity fits the self-renunciatory conception of agape. Grant's description of "the radical focus on the other that characterizes Nygren's reading" of agape (Grant 1996, 11) sounds very similar to Levinas's constant emphasis on escaping egoistic self-concern through abandonment to the Other: "... the miracle of the ego vindicating in the eyes of the neighbor... [is] the ego (*moi*) which has got rid of self (*soi*) and instead fears for the Other... It is in the laying down by the ego of its sovereignty (in its 'hateful modesty'), that we find ethics... (Levinas 1989, 85). By contrasting the face-to-face relation with *Mitsein* or "being-alongside" others (Levinas 1961/1969, 80) and by emphasizing the *lack* of "initial equality" between self and Other (Levinas 1994c, 44), Levinas describes our original access to others in terms of a "curvature of intersubjective space" toward the Other. By playing on Einsteinian relativity physics, this metaphor suggests that at the original "ethical" level, the Other acts like a "center of gravity" toward which the self is drawn, a well in ethical space toward which things flow.¹⁵

There is something profoundly right in Levinas's argument. His insistence that "the intersubjective relation is a non-symmetrical relation" reflects two principal points: (1) that our most basic moral responsibility to others does not arise (explicitly or implicitly) from our own voluntary acts and (2) that this responsibility is not conditioned on the Other's respecting and caring for us in turn. As Levinas says, "I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity... Reciprocity is his affair" (Levinas 1982/1985, 98). These two points are axiomatic for any agape ethics. Outka and Grant, for example, both agree that agape must be "unilateral" in the sense that it involves "a reaching out that carries

¹⁴ To this extent, Kierkegaard's account is really also reconciliatory, since he insists that "purity of heart" or wholehearted development in one's ethical will is a prerequisite for the works of love. See Alastair Hannay's discussion of the "purity of heart" theme (Hannay 1991, 205–40). As he points out in his chapters on neighbor-love, such volitional wholeheartedness is a necessary precondition of agape for Kierkegaard (1991, 241).
¹⁵ Derrida's preference for friendship *rather* than neighbor-love as the descriptive analogy for Levinas's heteronomical relation is thus ironically inapposite, because the analogy of friendship inspires the reconciliatory strand of agape ethics. As Grant's account suggests, *philia* is more closely related to those conceptions that take some form of mutuality to be essential to agape or neighbor-regard (Grant 1996, 7–10). Thus, in conceiving friendship, Derrida has to oppose the tradition from Aristotle to Kant that saw in friendship a requirement of reciprocity—or even equality—that limited its similarity to neighbor-love (Derrida 1988, 640 n. 7).

no assurance of response, much less of mutuality" (Grant 1996, 10). However, Levinas forgets both that I also have involuntary duties to myself and that *part of my caring response to the Other can be precisely a demand for appropriate reciprocity, although my responses are still required whether the Other reciprocates or not. Instead, Levinas writes: "Reciprocity is a structure founded on an original inequality. For equality to make its entry into the world, beings must be able to demand more of themselves than of the Other. . . ." (Levinas 1990a, 22). The assumption behind this insistence on radical asymmetry seems to be that if our demand is for universal love equally from all persons, it must be tainted by self-interest. But we can demand both love and justice from others without being moved by desire for our own fulfillment or benefit in this demand.*

As these considerations suggest, contemporary critiques of self-renunciatory or extreme "altruistic" interpretations of agape already contain much to challenge Levinas's portrayal. For example, Outka points out Robert Johann's argument in *The Meaning of Love* that at least the anticipated *possibility* of a response from the Other is essential to agape, because without it, my neighbor cannot even become "accessible to me as a *thou*," that is, as one whose own self-awareness is present in her individuality (Outka 1972, 38–39, citing Johann). Outka himself urges that *self-regard* must play an essential role in agape, which implies, contra Levinas, that the self cannot originally *derive* from any relation to the Other that precedes and determines its entire being as a self. If self-regard could never be agapistic, Outka argues, then agape would be reduced to writing our neighbor a "blank check," but this cannot be accepted because our love for our neighbor sometimes requires resisting her exploitations of us (1972, 21) or opposing her aggression against third parties (1972, 22–23). These actions can still be expressions of love, rather than simply expressions of justice that impartially limit generosity and care for others. Similarly, to think that any active expectation of the Other coming from the self-possession or interiority of the *I* must do violence to the Other or reduce her to a comprehended object seems to involve the same conflation of the self-regard included in agape with the selfishness that *destroys* it. Thus, Outka has recently insisted on distinguishing between "unqualified regard," which does not condition our concern for others on their response, and an "altruism" that denies any place for self-regard (Outka 1996, 37).

2.2 Connecting love and justice

Levinas's failure to make this crucial distinction between universal regard and selfishness is directly related to the familiar difficulty in

Daniel Guerrière remarks, "Levinas did not provide us with a basis for social, political, and economic morality" (Guerrrière 1996, 7).¹⁶ Similarly, a common objection against self-renunciatory accounts of agape is that they fail to connect neighbor-love to justice (Outka 1972, 81). As Outka says, "charity is not confined to I-Thou relations, but has a direct relevance for the world of institutions" (1972, 83).

In fairness, Levinas also insists that "the presence of the face does not invite complicity with the preferred being" but (against Heidegger) always places itself "in the full light of the public order" (Levinas 1961/1969, 213, 212), as in Outka's "equal regard." This lack of preferential "complicity" with particular others in Levinasian agape reflects his insistence that in the face-to-face relation, there is always an *indirect* relation to the whole universe of others: "the third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other" (Levinas 1961/1969, 213). His account of *le tiers*, the third party, is meant to show that the face-to-face relation, although generally portrayed as a unique encounter, still necessarily implies concern for the world of institutions in which others are socially defined and legally comprehended: "For love itself demands justice, and my relation with my neighbour cannot remain outside the lines which the neighbour maintains with various third parties. The third party is also my neighbour" (Levinas 1990a, 18). Thus, Levinas clearly recognizes the need for a justice not definable simply in terms of dialogical encounters. At the same time, he denies that the spirit of justice can be captured by the impartial symmetries of universal laws.¹⁷

However, a comparison of Levinas with Paul Ricoeur on this issue shows that Levinas's answer to the objection remains inadequate. In his still-unequaled essay "The Socius and the Neighbor," Ricoeur says, "When I reduce the theology of the neighbor to a theology of the encounter, I miss the fundamental meaning of the Lordship of God over *history*" (Ricoeur 1955/1965, 104). By Ricoeur's standards, Levinas's answer to this problem is still deficient because it portrays institutional justice only as a *limit* or corrective to charity, rather than as an integral part or extension of charity. As Levinas says in his interview with Philip Nemo:

¹⁶ See also Schweiker 1996, 290: "... moral thinking is oddly constricted to analyzing and articulating that command [in the Other's face]. Ethics does not give guidance for actual life. This assumes that the moral good is understandable outside of the institutions, relations, and structures of actual life."
¹⁷ In his Talmudic commentaries, Levinas adds: "Justice itself must already be mixed with goodness. It is this mixture that is indicated by the word *Rahamim*, which we have badly translated as 'pity.' It is that special form of pity which goes out to one who is expert-encing the harshness of the law" (Levinas 1990b, 28).

How is it that there is justice? I answer that it is the fact of the multiplicity of men and the presence of someone else next to the Other, which condition the laws and establish justice. If I am alone with the Other, I owe him everything; but there is someone else. . . . The interpersonal relation I establish with the Other, I must also establish with other men; there is thus a necessity to moderate this privilege of the Other; from whence comes justice. . . . [Levinas 1982/1985, 89–90, my emphasis].

Levinas understands our concern for institutionally mediated relations with others as a step beyond neighbor-love into an impersonal realm, which in turn must always be checked and balanced by noninstitutional agape, if it is not to become neutral and cold. As he writes, "Does not the essential difference between charity and justice come from the preference of charity for the other, even when, from the point of view of justice, no preference is any longer possible?" (Levinas 1979/1987d, 84). Aside from opposing agape to justice, this construal also suggests that justice cannot already be involved in the charity expressed in a dialogical encounter isolated from third parties.

Ricoeur argues instead that "it is the same charity which gives meaning to the social institution and to the event of the encounter." Thus, for Ricoeur, the *socius* and the neighbor are "two dimensions of the same history, the two faces of the same charity" (Ricoeur 1955/1965, 103). Nor is an institutional relation necessarily *impersonal* just because it is universalizing and may occur at a distance: "At times the personal relationship to the neighbor passes *through* the relationship to the *socius*" (1955/1965, 105). For example, I can even support distributive justice on the motive of agape: then I am still loving as a neighbor (rather than merely as *socius*) a beneficiary who lives far away and remains anonymous to me. Not to recognize this, Ricoeur says, risks turning agape into a "personalist anarchism" (1955/1965, 105).

This disagreement brings out a fundamental tension in the very idea of neighbor-love: like affection, it must involve *personal* care and involvement (not mere commitment to procedural impartiality), and yet, like abstract rules and unlike contingent emotions, it must be able to be extended universally.¹⁸ Ricoeur and Levinas both recognize this paradox, but they take opposite routes in trying to resolve it. Ricoeur interprets agape as a universalizing attitude toward concrete others, while Levinas makes it into a concrete and singular relation with a generalized Otherness. On Ricoeur's model, as on Levinas's, agape requires

¹⁸ We might say that in this respect agape is like *vollition* in the classical tripartite soul: it stands between the concrete-but-partial nature of the appetites and the abstract-but-impartial nature of speculative reason. Like "rational appetite," it must be a personal conatus and yet guidable by the universal.

universal regard and is contrary to the partiality which characterizes all affections: for instance, "I am not discharged of all responsibility to other children simply by loving my own" (Ricoeur 1955/1965, 103). For Ricoeur, however, the universal scope of agape is rooted in its distinctive motivational quality and can therefore be directed toward others loved as neighbors in all their social particularity. My "neighbors" do not have to come into immediate dialogical encounters to retain their concrete individuality for me, since even through social mediation, if I am motivated by love for them, I respond to them personally. By contrast, in Levinas's model, the subject's personal involvement or "irreplaceability"¹⁹ is constituted by the direct and unmediated nature of the encounter, which checks and is checked by the universality of justice. As Guerrère puts it: "in all the analyses of ethicality, we find no recognition of the *différence* that the 'third' makes. To interrelate with another person through a third (of indefinite number) is not at all the same as to relate to another face-to-face. . . . Levinas reduces the interhuman to the dialogical" (Guerrère 1996, 8).

However, it is important that one can agree with Ricoeur on this issue without subscribing to all aspects of the larger story he tells against Levinas in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992, chaps. 7 and 8). In his new account of the ethical, Ricoeur privileges "the reciprocity of friendship"—a "solicitude" balanced between "*giving* and *receiving*"—in a way that tries to furnish a eudaimonistic motive for benevolence, thereby losing what is distinctive in agape, just as Levinas feared (Ricoeur 1992, 188–89). As Cohen says in his reply, Ricoeur disagrees with Levinas both in "establishing the primacy of [individual] moral character over moral sociality [interpersonal relations]" and in equating "moral sociality with normativity" (Cohen 1996, 1–2). Cohen rightly protests that Levinas's analysis works against the assumption "that giving priority to moral sociality means giving priority to moral norms, hence reducing alterity to moral law, and moral selfhood to obedience to duty" (Cohen 1996, 4). Ricoeur argues that we must "give solicitude a more fundamental status than obedience to duty" because it can ground "an ethical sense" capable of prudent judgment when rules fail to guide (Ricoeur 1992, 190). Nonetheless, this argument fails if, as Levinas maintains, our original sense of duty is not discursive and cannot be captured by any limiting set of precepts.²⁰ As William Schweiker sug-

¹⁹ See Levinas 1978/1981, 114, for a discussion of "substitution."

²⁰ Levinas reads the command "Thou shalt not kill" as forbidding "violent" appropriation in general; it is a prohibition too general to be satisfied by restraining alone and is equivalent to a *positive* and open-ended responsibility to respond to others with care for their well-being.

gests, it is possible to hold that Levinas is correct in insisting on "the unconditional character of ethics," even while holding that he is wrong to think that every form of reciprocity makes our responsibility conditional (Schweiker 1996, 291). Agape ethics is possible precisely because eudaimonistic and radically self-effacing motives do not exhaust the alternatives.

3. Freedom, Passivity, and Exteriority

The preceding analysis suggests that Levinas's ordinary relation to the Other as an asymmetric form of protoagape represents a limiting case among self-renunciatory accounts; hence, it must face the objections to extreme altruism already familiar in the reconciliationist literature on agape. Levinasians might respond that these criticisms cannot apply to Levinas, since he is referring solely to the *metaphysical* level in which meaning first arises intersubjectively—that is, the level of the "original orientation of being starting from oneself" toward "the Other," a relation that "precedes the terms that are placed in it" (Levinas 1961/1969, 215). It is tempting to argue that such an absolutely other-oriented relation at the metaphysical level would be compatible with *either* strand of neighbor-love at the ethical level. The difficulty is that at his own metaphysical level, Levinas insists that the *I* finds itself as "always already" having issued an outstanding blank check to the Otherness of its neighbor.²¹ The "[r]esponsibility for my neighbor" that "dates from before my freedom," from an ultimate past, is an "infinite subjection of subjectivity" that makes me "hostage" to the stranger (Levinas 1989, 84). The irreducibly first-personal identity or interiority of the *I* itself depends on "the unlimited nature of that responsibility for the neighbor" (Levinas 1994c, 44). Thus, the lopsidedness of Levinasian protoagape at this metaphysical level produces difficulties similar to those that dog self-renunciatory accounts of agape: as we will see in what follows, it forces Levinas to misconstrue human alterity and the origin of ethical responsibility.

The self-conscious transcendental subject, Levinas tells us, "also remains a non-intentional consciousness of itself, as though it were a surplus. . . ." (Levinas 1989, 79). The original ethical awareness of the

²¹ When I first presented this argument at SPFP, listeners found Outka's monetary image inappropriate, but I am convinced that Levinas would have embraced this figure of the "blank check" with thanks precisely because it inverts the usual economic expectation of a return involved in writing a check, suggesting a limitless commitment. "To be oneself" in the pre-ontological ethical sense "is to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other" (Levinas 1978/1981, 117).

Other thus arises for Levinas at a level that parallels Sartre's pre-reflective *cogito* (the nonreflective "consciousness (of) consciousness" that underlies anythetic or "positional consciousness of an object" whose being transcends consciousness), because this self-awareness does not apprehend consciousness itself as an intentional object (Sartre 1943/1956, 11–13). Levinas repeats this idea that self-consciousness always involves "a non-intentional consciousness of itself" distinct from all reflection or introspection (Levinas 1989, 79), but he attributes this to our ordinary openness to alterity: Otherness is first encountered in a "non-intentional consciousness" that is "non-reflective" and prior to all introspection, a "lapse" of pure duration that occurs passively, "outside all activity of the ego" (Levinas 1989, 80). At this original level of temporal movement, there is not already a "subject postulating itself" assured of its right to be; rather, I receive my very being only in the "accusatory" mode, as already called to respond (Levinas 1989, 81–82), or in a responsibility that is prior to and independent of my free commitments: "as if I were devoted to the other man before being devoted to myself. Or more exactly, as if I had to answer for the other's death even before *being*" (Levinas 1989, 83). Thus, "the non-intentional is from the start passivity" (Levinas 1989, 81–82). Levinas stresses this point again in *Otherwise than Being*: "we discern in obsession [with the Other] a responsibility that rests on no free commitment, a responsibility whose entry into being could be effected only without any choice" (Levinas 1978/1981, 116). Thus, in relation to this responsibility, "[t]he self is through and through a hostage" (Levinas 1978/1981, 117).

Levinas's insight here is that the very power to make significant choices—to commit oneself passionately to causes or to identify with some existential possibilities over others—cannot originate from a Sartrean inner "nothingness" that is essentially neutral, but only from a being-already-committed, a *built-in* fundamental identification or nonneutral orientation that is, nevertheless, not as determinate as an organic *telos*. This allows Levinas to avoid what he calls "bare" or "arbitrary" freedom by "investing" choice in a foundation outside itself (Levinas 1961/1969, 84–85). By contrast, Sartre's conception of consciousness as ecstasis—as standing above one's given circumstances and material dependencies—led him to conclude that consciousness can have no law or motivation it does not give itself: "But consciousness is consciousness through and through. It can be limited only by itself" (Sartre 1943/1956, 15). Yet for Sartre, this "freedom" turns out to mean that consciousness cannot really condition itself or limit its possibilities at all (Sartre 1943/1956, 70). For in anguish, the human being finds that her freedom, which is not one of her *properties* but rather the very being of her reality (Sartre 1943/1956, 60), threatens her from a future utterly

outside her control: "The decisive conduct will emanate from a self which I am not yet" (Sartre 1943/1956, 69). Ironically, then, in Sartre's model, I become passive in relation to my own being, since "the freedom which I am remains out of my reach" in its futurity (Sartre 1943/1956, 73).

Levinas identifies a similar point of passivity in Heidegger's ontology: although Heidegger "affirms the primacy of freedom over ethics," this freedom is not a "free will," a faculty we own or deploy; rather, "[f]ree-dom comes from an obedience to Being: it is not man who possesses freedom; it is freedom that possesses man" (Levinas 1961/1969, 45). To this limited extent, Levinas can agree with Heidegger and Sartre. In the tradition deriving from Kant, *being* is not a property, and for Levinas this means that if freedom is what the self is, the self must be absolutely passive in relation to the "origin" of this freedom, which transcends it. It is helpful to compare this analysis briefly with Jean-Luc Nancy's argument, following Levinas and Kant, that freedom cannot be "founded" in the self because freedom is not a faculty we possess (Nancy 1988/1993, 21); rather, it arises in the unique "experience" of an ethical *fatum*:

Obligation is the fact proceeding from the nonavailability, for the existent, of an essence (and/or power) of the self that could be represented and intended. But if the essence of existence is existence itself, . . . it obligates itself, in its existence, only to exist, that is, to be exposed to the effectivity that it is, because it "is" not in any mode of a property of existence. . . . [This] constitutes the very fact of experience of practical reason. . . . It is the fact of freedom [Nancy 1988/1993, 28, Nancy's italics].

According to Nancy, personal existence is not an ontological mode but the very experience of non-self-ownership, or unrecoverable absolute *beholdeness*. Nancy describes "existence" in this sense as an un-*participatable* ethical *fatum*.²² The self—the very first-personal interiority of the ego whose separateness cannot be assumed in a utilitarian calculus—itself arises only as responsive to the transcendence of the Other.

This "beholdeness" is Levinas's theme as well. Even human rights derive from an experience to which one is entirely *given over*, something we can call an "experience" only by analogy, since the self does not contingently have it or intend it, since the self is the very *existence* of experiencing, or openness to the genuinely new. As Alphonso Lingis says, with reference to the Other, "His approach summons me, calls up an I out of the anonymity of sensuous and utilitarian existence, because his

²² Nancy emphasizes "the surprising" as characteristic of such ordinary experience (Nancy 1988/1993, 15).

presence orders me" (Lingis 1989, 137). In contrast to any *ontological* origin (which he assumes would consist of an essential self-relatedness), Levinas refers to this as the "creation *ex nihilo*" of the self: what is commanded into being by such an absolute call cannot be answering freely to the command, since it *exists only as-commanded* (Levinas 1978/1981, 113). Thus, "[t]he self as a creature is conceived in a passivity more passive still than the passivity of matter" (Levinas 1978/1981, 113–14). As Wes Avram puts it, "I am created in that prior turning towards the Other" that precedes all acts of attention to concrete aspects of others, our relations, and their contingent expectations of me (Avram 1996, 268).

Still, Levinas insists that there is a sense in which I *do* own my free ego. Because the metaphysical "Desire" of responsibility is not a relation between terms that *need* one another as complements, these terms must, in one sense, "suffice to themselves." Such Desire is "the life of beings that have arrived at self-possession" (Levinas 1961/1969, 103). Metaphysical Desire can only be "the aspiration of him who possesses his being entirely, who goes beyond his plenitude, who has the idea of Infinity" (Levinas 1961/1969, 103). Thus, the description of our ethical responsibility as protoagapeistic metaphysical Desire or an original outgoing toward the Other still implies a certain "independence" of the self or distance from the Other. As Levinas explains in discussing freedom, responsibility is "a dependence on an exteriority without this dependence absorbing the dependent being, held in invisible meshes. This dependence, consequently, *at the same time* produces an independence; such is the face to face relation" (Levinas 1961/1969, 88). This relation produces an *I* that is independent in the sense that it does not *need* or even expect the Other in its essence; yet this whole structure of independent self-related individuality derives from a more primordial and originally ethical relation of responsibility for the Other, which is its "creation."²³

Levinas also frequently emphasizes that the Other does not destroy the self's freedom, but rather creates it: "the absolutely other—the Other—does not limit the freedom of the same; calling it to responsibility, it finds and justifies it" (Levinas 1961/1969, 197). The first passivity of the self-same, prior both to acting and being acted on, thus both allows the self to escape solipsism by touching what is truly external, anticipated in no constitutive forehaving, and to emerge as unique because of the first-person irreplaceability of the protoethical commitment in which it is bound "before" its ontological beginning: "In this

²³ On Levinas's contrast between ontological foundation and "creation," see Kosky 1996, 242.

most passive passivity, the self liberates itself ethically from every other and from itself" (Levinas 1978/1981, 115). Moreover, because of the non-teleological character of metaphysical Desire, "[t]he face in which the other—the absolutely other—presents himself does not negate the same, does not do violence to it" (Levinas 1961/1969, 203).

Note, however, that this account is nonviolent only in the ontological sense that it does not subsume the *I* into a totality, because as a radically created being or "creature," its essential dependence on the Other is not that of a part to a whole (Levinas 1961/1969, 104). As created, the creature is a "dependent being" that "draws from this exceptional dependence, from this relationship, its very independence, its exteriority to the system" (Levinas 1961/1969, 105). My unsubsumable alterity and self-sufficiency, which make possible Desire as a "generous" movement out of myself, is therefore *posterior* to an absolutely passive dependence. The independent "closed domain of the soul" is itself constituted by the Other and thus "cannot be closed from the inside" (Levinas 1987c, 149). Hence, although there is no *ontological* violence in Levinas's model (since the self is not absorbed by the Other), at the *ethical* level an asymmetry occurs that places the Other as high above the self as the Creator-ex-nihilo above His creatures—which is surely a violent analogy.²⁴ Although "[t]he identity of the *I* comes to it from its egoism whose insular sufficiency is accomplished by enjoyment," this self-sufficiency itself is still clearly "founded on the infinitude of the other" (Levinas 1961/1969, 216). The meaning of this claim is clarified in a very revealing passage from *Otherwise than Being*: "It is as though the unity and uniqueness of the ego were already the hold on itself of the gravity of the other"; thus, the individual ego is literally created "by regard for all that is," the universal regard of protogape (Levinas 1978/1981, 118). In its creaturely or absolute dependence on responsibility for the vulnerability of the Other, "[t]he subjectivity of the subject is a radical passivity of man" (Levinas 1987c, 146). Because it arises with such an infinite passivity, the self also has (for others) the same kind of vulnerability that commands it from the Face of its Other:

In vulnerability there then lies a relationship with the other which causes ality does not exhaust, a relationship antecedent to being affected by a stimulus. The identity of the self does not set limits to undergoing, not even the last resistance that matter "in potency" opposes to the form that invests it. Vulnerability is obsession by the other or an approaching of the

²⁴ See Levinas 1978/1981, 116, for the argument that ethical passivity is not violence. This claim is hard to square with Levinas's language of hostage-taking. Even if the responsibility in which the Other holds my freedom does not destroy the separateness of my ego in the face-to-face, the way it constitutes this independence seems violent indeed.

other. It is being *for another*, behind the *other* of a stimulus [Levinas 1987c, 146, Levinas's emphasis].

Here Levinas is analyzing persons on the analog of Sartre's factual "in-itself," which refers to the material aspect of our being that is essentially *being-for-others* and in tension with the for-itself at the heart of our subjectivity. It is only the Other who discerns my in-itself, the outer "Face" that is "beneath all particular expressions" of my thoughts or feelings (Levinas 1989, 83). Just as Sartre argues that I can never grasp my being-in-itself because it is unrecoverably exposed to the Other's gaze, Levinas speaks of the "metaphysical asymmetry" of responsibility as related to "the radical impossibility of seeing oneself from the outside" (Levinas 1961/1969, 53). The Levinasian Face is thus an "extreme exposure" of mortal facticity to the other person (Levinas 1961/1969, 53).

Levinas follows Sartre this far, but then he inverts Sartre's analysis in a fascinating way. Sartre had concluded that my regard grasps the Other's bodily being-in-itself (which he can never possess), thereby reducing him to his facticity, while he does the same thing to me in a kind of mutual objectification (see Sartre 1943/1956, 340–400). By contrast, Levinas says that I come into being (*ex nihilo*) in a protorespect for the unappropriability of the Other's in-itself. His bodily outwardness is no longer a material resistance or chthonic density as in Sartre's account, but an irresistible impression of fragility that commands me to pre-serve it. Similarly, my exterior side I cannot know is an ethical Face for others, not a *being-in-itself* against which my for-itself arises by an original nihilation. Where Sartre locates the Other's being-in-itself in his body, Levinas insists that there is instead a *transcendence* that is not essentially negative like the for-itself, an infinity that "is not reducible to the negation of the imperfect" (Levinas 1961/1969, 41). Both hold that I do not actively *own* the subjectivity of my subject, but for Levinas this is because my subjectivity originally arises as a response to the positive transcendence of the Other, whereas for Sartre it results from a negation of my own materiality or by an ecstasis that places me at a modal distance from what I am factically, opening me to alternative possibilities. While it develops from Sartre's idea of the in-itself as outwardness open to alterity, as ethical ecstasis, the Levinasian self is "a passivity more passive . . . than . . . matter," as we saw above (see page 350). Levinas also denies Sartre's distinction between the for-itself (the intrasubjective aspect of personhood that makes a human being individual) and the in-itself (the externality that makes a person factual). Having interpreted the in-itself (exteriority) as ethical transcendence (the Face), Levinas also holds that my own inward identity, which pre-

vents me from being a mere instantiation of a species (Levinas 1994c, 117), derives from my being lifted out of myself in prevolitional responsibility for others. This unrecoverable "outwardness" is from the Other's perspective precisely *my* Face. The Face can play both these roles in Levinas's model because, in his view, the radical vulnerability which others apprehend as my in-itself (calling them to responsibility) *just is* my original passivity in being given over to *my* Other as created in responsibility for her. "No one," Levinas writes, "can remain himself; the humanity of man, subjectivity, is a responsibility for the others, an extreme vulnerability. The return to the self becomes an interminable detour. Prior to consciousness and choice, . . . man approached man. He is made of responsibilities" (Levinas 1987c, 149). This implies that I am vulnerable and am a Face (which makes others responsible for me) just because I am constituted in original responsibility for them—that is, because I am faced with their vulnerability. But if so, then a problematic recursiveness is implicit in Levinas's model: we are created responsible for an Other because he is a Face, but he is a Face precisely because he arises as already "outside-himself" in responsibility for others, whose constitutive appeal to him derives in turn from their passive exteriority and so forth.

This analysis points toward two objections to Levinas's metaphysical account. First, such an account hides a dangerous circularity, since what my passivity is *to me*—namely my unchosen original responsibility for another—is not what my passivity is to the Other: for my neighbor, my passivity is, rather, my Face. But can our passivities call one another into being? Alternatively, if my neighbor's Face, which calls me into existence, is the outward exposure of his passivity, which in turn originates only in the subjectivity of his subject—his infinite responsibility for another's Face—then we have begun a vicious regression. Sartre's more nihilistic model of intersubjectivity is designed to avoid just this dilemma.

Second, Levinas's account also suggests that my moral responsibility to other creatures is limited *only* to creatures that are themselves endowed with moral responsibility, which is surely too narrow. I will not pursue these problems here except to say that this recursive feature of Levinas's quasi-phenomenology of the Face does not introduce reciprocity into the attitude of agape as he portrays it: at most, it suggests that ethical responsibility as protogape involves an indirect "reciprocity" of *asymmetries* or a correlation of separate passive vulnerabilities. In Levinas's radical reinterpretation, then, the in-itself is no longer an intolerable physical contingency in ourselves that is grasped by the Other's look; rather, it is the ethical intolerance of the Other's suffering in her embodiment. Her Face is the manifest wrongness or *evil* of

her suffering and, hence, the first ethical revelation of a responsibility to oppose this evil. Thus, in commenting on Nemo's analysis of the Book of Job, Levinas argues, in "Transcendence and Evil," that the ethical *begins* with horror at the evil of the Other's suffering and that only in this way does it find the trace of the infinite Good (Levinas 1987e, 184). Moreover, Levinas agrees with Nemo that this evil is essentially the Other's carnality or exposure to chaotic arbitrariness and death:

Sickness, evil in living, aging, corruptible flesh, perishing and rotting, would be the modalities of anxiety itself; through them and in them, death is as it were lived, and the truth of this death is unforgettable. . . . the original insomnia of being. There is a consuming of human identity, which is not an inviolable spirit charged with a perishable body, but [an] incarnation. . . . Despair despairs as the evil of the flesh; physical evil is the very depth of anxiety. . . . anxiety, in its carnal severity, is the root of all social miseries, all human dereliction, of humiliation, of solitude, persecution [Levinas 1987e, 179].

It is telling that Levinas conceives the Other's *externality*, which becomes a protoethical revelation of evil, in metaphors of the *chthonic* that Sartre also associated with the in-itself in all its forms of vulnerability. Although the in-itself as Face is not the passivity of matter in the physical sense, it is still the earthboundness of flesh in the archetypal sense (see Davenport 1999).

4. Tracing the Ethical to the Eschatological

Sartreans, however, might well demand to know why the exposed in-itself of the Other must be an *ethical* demand, or a Face in Levinas's sense. To this, Levinas can respond only that the death of the Other affects us as evil because it somehow points beyond *both* being and on-tological nothingness²⁵ to an *excess* or infinity of malice (Levinas 1987e, 179–80), which is itself one of two ambiguously opposed aspects of divinity (1987e, 181). At the level of this divided divinity, we find what Levinas describes as the "de-neutralization of being, or the beyond being." Prior to all *neutral being* of ontology, we find "the difference between

²⁵ Levinas interprets Heidegger's conception of death and the "impossibility of possibility" as ontological nonbeing, not as a beyond-being in his sense. One could argue, though, that in Heidegger's later writings ontology ceases to be "ontological" in Levinas's sense and that the "Being" of beings is not understood as the ground of the "basic concepts" but as the eschatological beyond-being in Levinas's sense, something that *gives* beings being, but is never a neighbor, like Levinasian "Illeity." Thus, Heidegger refers, in connection with justice, to the Being of beings as an *eschatological* gathering of their destiny (Heidegger 1984, 18).

good and evil" in what may be described as their absolute forms (1987e, 182).²⁶ Levinas agrees with Nemo's idea that our "horror of evil," when encountered in this ultimate sense, implies awareness of an equally inordinate goodness, a "reversal of evil and the horror of evil into an expectation of the Good, of God and of a beatitude to the measure, or the inordinateness, of the excess of evil" (1987e, 183). In this contrast, we find a realm of meaning that originates in "the you which in God eclipses *being*" rather than in the (supposedly impersonal and neutral) Being of beings.²⁷ In God, being is but an attribute and is eclipsed in a glory beyond being, a good beyond essence (1987e, 176). The hope for this good is clearly eschatological for Levinas, but in a sense that eschews all desire for vengeance or reward: as he says, "The soul beyond satisfaction and recompense expects an awaited that infinitely surpasses expectancy" (in the teleological or economic sense) (1987e, 183–84). This is remarkably close in formulation to the claim in an earlier essay that generosity aims at a future-eternity that is "a time beyond the horizon of my time, in an eschatology without hope for oneself. . . ." (1987b, 92).²⁸ Ethics requires "a work without remuneration" that is "an action for a world to come. . ." (1987b, 93).

4.1 *The eschatological transcendence of Levinasian alterity*

As this analysis suggests, Levinas's frequent references to eschatology in the preface of *Totality and Infinity* are meant quite literally—as long as the literal meaning of an eschatological *hereafter* is properly understood not as an *ontological* state after death (or personal salvation naively imagined as more of the same existence), but as the "radical unknown to which death leads" (Levinas 1961/1969, 41), the *beyond* to which death is the passage: "Eschatology institutes a relation with being

²⁶ We might compare this opposition to the absolute eschatological difference between glory and horror, or salvation and damnation.

²⁷ The notion of "being" that Levinas employs changes over time. In *Totality and Infinity* (1961/1969), being is understood primarily in the Husserlian sense as the correlate of knowledge, and Levinas agrees with Husserl's insight that "[t]he access to being belongs to the Other transcends 'being' in this epistemic sense, Levinas seems to oppose idealism in favor of some kind of realism. But in his later works, being is understood as ethically neutral actuality, for which thinghood is the paradigm. By contrast, the beyond-being is not simply the real, but rather the non-neutral.

²⁸ In both cases Levinas characterizes the eschatological in Kierkegaardian fashion as a victory that *cannot be expected* as a personal reward or future payoff, thus subverting the Nietzschean suspicion of resentment, which misunderstands the meaning of eschatological expectancy.

beyond the totality or beyond history, and not [merely] with being beyond the past and the present" (Levinas 1961/1969, 22). In other words, the eschaton is not a future period in being, but is futural in the analogous sense of lying beyond being. As Brian Schroeder says, for Levinas the eschaton is "a rupture of linear futurity, of the totality of historical being" (Schroeder 1996, 142). In *Time and the Other*, Levinas argues that like the ungraspable Other, death reveals a future surpassing anticipation and all projected possibilities, an "authentic future" that "is not grasped" by anticipatory consciousness (Levinas 1979/1987d, 76-77). The here-after beyond death is a "time" (if we can use that term) that is both futural and yet eternal. Thus "[t]he eschatological, as the 'beyond' of history, draws beings out of the jurisdiction of history and the future" as ordinarily conceived (Levinas 1961/1969, 23). It is not from a shared contemporaneity but from "another shore" that the Face of the Other calls me.

Hence, Levinas's conclusion that "[t]here is a priority . . . of the ethical over the ontological" (1987e, 182) rests implicitly on the priority of the eschatological (in its primordial sense, to which the ethical is assimilated) over the ontological. The infinity of the Other, which makes me responsible when I encounter her directly (rather than apprehending her in an intentional structure linked to universalizing conditions of rational validity), is eschatological infinity: ". . . this going beyond death is produced not in the universality of thought but in the pluralist relation, in the goodness of being for the Other, in justice" (Levinas 1961/1969, 301-2). Infinity can be distinguished from totality only because (pace Derrida's interpretation) eschatology represents neither a teleological goal for the agent nor any historical wholism (see Schroeder 1996, 226-27). Like morality, "[t]he eschatological vision breaks with the totality of wars and empires. . . . It does not envisage the end of history within being understood as a totality, but institutes a relation with an infinity of being which exceeds the totality" (Levinas 1961/1969, 23). It is not Levinas's intention to reduce the ethical to the eschatological, nor does he mean to imply that ethics is founded on a particular revelation or on the theology of any historical religion; rather, from within "philosophical evidence" we are supposed to discover "a situation where totality breaks up," revealing eschatology in its ordinary sense (1961/1969, 24):

The first "vision" of eschatology (hereby distinguished from the revealed opinions of positive religions) reveals the very possibility of eschatology, that is, the breach of the totality, the possibility of a *signification without a context*. The experience of morality does not proceed from this vision—it consummates this vision; ethics is an optics [1961/1969, 23].

In other words, the original meaning of eschatology, prior to all revealed religion (note the Hegelian overtones here), is supposed to be the *ethical* revealed in infinity, "the gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the Other" (1961/1969, 24). Thus, Levinas really intends to derive his protoeschatology from our ethical duty: ethics is "a spiritual optics" because God is accessible *only* in the "work of justice"; thus, "[t]he dimension of the divine opens forth from the human face" (1961/1969, 78).²⁹ As Derrida says, the "messianic eschatology from which Levinas draws inspiration" is not justified on the authority of biblical texts but in the most originary experience of "departure toward the other" (Derrida 1978, 83).³⁰

However, there are two reasons Levinas cannot, despite his intentions to the contrary, avoid reducing the ethical to the eschatological. First, to avoid circularity, Levinas's attempt to distinguish a purely *ethical* protoeschatology requires that the ethical already have a clarified meaning, independent of reference to eschatological divinity.³¹ Yet, according to Levinas, the ethical begins with the substitution called forth by the Other, and the transcendence of the Other itself gets its very meaning by reference to eschatological infinity: "the Other is not a *new edition of myself*; in its Otherness, it is situated in a dimension of height, in the ideal, the Divine, and through my relation to the Other, I am in touch with God. . . . Ethics is not a corollary of the vision of God; it is that very vision" (1990a, 17). In his determination to avoid an empathy-theory of our access to others and to deny any access to God except through our ethical responsibility to others, Levinas ends up *reducing the objects of responsibility to divine alterity*. The infinity of a future beyond death and being, however purified of religious picture-thinking, is not rationally derivable from any ethical ideal; it involves an idea of ultimacy irreducible to the ethical in all its known forms (Davenport 1996). Contrary to his intentions, then, eschatology remains the primitive term in Levinas's analysis.

Second, although it is not derived from the authority of any particular historical faith, Levinasian eschatology involves a temporal element that cannot be explained via the ethical experience of responsibility.

²⁹ The human Face as a kind of transcendent *fatum* plays the same role for meta-physics that "sensible experience" played for Kant (Levinas 1961/1969, 79). Compare this with Nancy's treatment of the nonsensible *fatum* of existence-as-free.
³⁰ Derrida later rightly questions whether this experience can be free from theological dependence (Derrida 1978, 103).
³¹ For example, in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, the ethical is already understood as universal duty, and the eschatological is then evoked as the (humanly incalculable, and thus absurd) possibility of the fulfillment of the ethical in the temporal order of finite, concrete actuality.

Levinas certainly does not conceive eschatology as an expected millennialist liberation in history, but it is not right to say that Levinas's eschatology "awaits *nothing*" at all (Derrida 1978, 95). On the contrary, the hereafter it awaits is simply beyond the ethically neutral ontological alternatives of being and nothingness. It is a "pure future . . . *beyond history* as economy" that gives the Face its height and inviolability for Levinas: thus ethical "experience itself is eschatological at its origin and in each of its aspects" (Derrida 1978, 95). As Derrida suggests, Yahweh is not a neighbor for Levinas, but remains third-personal, just because "[a]ll faces are His. . ." (Derrida 1978, 109, quoting Edmund Jabes).

4.2 *The anonymity of pure Otherness*

This analysis reveals a serious difficulty with Levinas's account of ethical alterity: since the Face of the Other signifies simply the eschatological sanctity of the person, love of the neighbor-as-Face does not address the distinct alterity of *this other* as a particular human being. The individuality and specific texture of other persons is lost because their Faces are reduced to a *pure eschatological Otherness*, a mark of divinity which is the same in each case.

Several important passages spanning Levinas's career confirm this assessment. After describing alterity in futural and eschatological terms, Levinas says that "[t]he very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future" (Levinas 1979/1987d, 77). In other words, what calls us in the Face is the eschatological alterity of a "future" in which personal reward or compensation cannot be anticipated and thus cannot motivate us. The Face not only gives us access to the God who cannot appear (Levinas 1985, 92); the Face is *nothing* but the hierarchy of this eschatological divinity: "the relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery. The other's *entire being* is constituted by its exteriority, or rather its alterity. . ." (1979/1987d, 75–76, my emphasis). As its alterity, or Face, "[t]he other is than being is the glory of God" (1979/1987d, 109).

Levinas's descriptions of our caring response to the call of alterity also reflect its eschatological significance. "The justice rendered to the Other, my neighbor, gives me an unsurpassable proximity to God" (1990a, 18). An ethical response to the Face, which involves a "[t]otal gratuity of action," is "action for a world to come, a going beyond oneself—a going beyond oneself which requires the epiphany of the epoch—*Other*" (1987b, 93). The epiphany of the Face to which we automatically respond is thus a pure trace of eschatological hereafterness. In order to avoid the fallacy of empathy, Levinas turns to hierophany. As in Rosenzweig's philosophy, the human other is "original on the basis of its

presence to God, on the basis of the present of Revelation," and in such revelation, truth is "the unfolding of an event, an eschatological drama" (1988/1994b, 156, 154).

Since the Other who imposes responsibility by requiring my response is an absolute futurity or eschatological alterity, Levinasian proto-agape cannot relate us to others as complete, situated persons. As Schweiker has said, by identifying the good with "the brute facticity of the encounter," Levinas "abstracts from all characteristics which make persons actual persons. We encounter the 'other,' not the complex and ambiguous reality of real human beings" (Schweiker 1996, 290).³² The danger of this outcome first appears in Levinas's efforts to distinguish the Face as "beyond those plastic forms" of the countenance in which the Other might express his or her own *character* (Levinas 1989, 82–83);³³ these only "mask" a Face in which the Other does not signal his interiority, as Derrida says, because "he is this face" (Derrida 1978, 100, my emphasis). His transcendence is an exterior facticity (or Sartrean in-itself) inaccessible to his own interior consciousness: his Face is just the automatic expression of this beyondness, that is, the pure Otherness of the other—a call that is as *involuntary* and constitutive as the responsibility it calls forth from others (Levinas 1961/1969, 200). Similarly, because the Face is fixed, rather than being the plastic medium for the person's *own* expression of her distinct character, it can be neither deceptive nor truthful (Levinas 1961/1969, 202).³⁴

Levinas's analysis of intersubjectivity thus has an unintended result. He claims that because the *I* is "turned away from itself" in a responsibility prior to "inward identification" with itself (Levinas 1987c, 150), in its origin the "*I* is an *other*" (1987c, 145). On his analysis, however, the *I* will instead merely be indiscriminate *Otherness*. As Schroeder says, "Discourse with the Other is discourse with God. It is the phenomenon of continual revelation itself" (Schroeder 1996, 147). But "God" is an anonymous trace, implied in an absence that haunts every human Face in the same way (Kosky 1996, 254–58). Levinas insists that "the Other is not an incarnation of God" (Levinas 1961/1969, 79) and re-

³² However, contrary to Schweiker's suggestion that this emptying of detail results from a decision to bracket the reciprocities of everyday life, it actually results from Levinas's conflation of the ethical and eschatological.

³³ See also Levinas 1961/1969, 200: "To manifest oneself as a face is to *impose* oneself above and beyond any phenomenal form, to present oneself in a mode irreducible to manifestation [that is, expression of inward thoughts or feelings]."

³⁴ Levinas adds that "deceit and veracity" in self-expression "already presuppose the absolute authenticity of the face" (Levinas 1961/1969, 202). But since this Face expresses no character at all beyond undifferentiated Otherness, in what sense could this Face be "authentic" or truthful?

mains a specific other,³⁵ but his analysis of intersubjectivity undermines this claim. As Derrida says, the essential "schema" of Levinas's thought is the claim that "the other is the other only if his alterity is absolutely irreducible" (Derrida 1978, 104). But, as Derrida seems to realize, the very extremism of this view destroys real human intersubjectivity, since it implies that our Other becomes simply a vessel of pure eschatological *heteron*. As Zeev Levy points out, in his second essay on Levinas (Derrida 1980), Derrida rejects the Husserlian interpretation of the Other as an *alter ego*, but contrary to Levinas, he insists that the Other cannot be wholly other and must also be thought of as "another I" and respected on that basis: "According to Derrida, Levinas did not perceive this symmetry of two anonymous ipseities. Therefore peace is for him part of an eschatological dimension, the 'victory of Messianism'" (Levy 1995, 300-301).

In short, unless the self is granted more independence and symmetry in its original ethical relation to others, it can identify its others only as metonyms of the eschatological.³⁶ The absoluteness of my dependence on the Other prevents me from responding to her as a distinctive individual. If my brothers and sisters can have no native human or *non-eschatological* meanings unless these are violently imposed on them, they can receive their Otherness *only anagogically* by becoming tropes of the eschatological good beyond being.³⁷ The alterity of the Face then becomes a pure hierophany of eschatological divinity, whose vessels remain indistinguishable. The *limited alterity* of the distinctively human stranger, or the nonapocalyptic otherness of the neighbor, is lost, not in Hegel's "night in which all cows are black," but instead in the glory in which all others are infinite.

³⁵ He writes, "... across my idea of the Infinite the other faces me—hostile, friend, my master, my student" (Levinas 1961/1969, 81).

³⁶ One could try to respond by maintaining that God (the eschatological good that breaks with totality) is only traced in the very *plurality* of human Faces, the multiplicity of their distinct alterities. But how, then, would we get the *difference* between one Face that calls us in a direct encounter, and another who remains (for the moment) a "Third," or outside the encounter? This remains a problem for Levinas's account, since it would be circular to explain the possibility of distinguishing the Other from the Third (or "other other") by appeal to an Illeity whose traces we have *defined* as plural or differentiated.

³⁷ This problem arises because Levinas excludes the possibility that the self could actively understand its companions as Other without translating them into alter egos or neuter instantiations of an essence. Levinas presupposes that any form of *universality* necessarily entails *impersonality*—an axiom that derives from Hegelian conceptions that Kantian ethics must efface the concreteness characteristic of individuals. But this axiom overlooks the possibility of a *distinctively first-personal universal attitude*, which is made possible (for example) by a subjective appropriation of objective norms (see Davenport 1995, 88).

5. Resolving the Dilemmas of Agape Ethics

This article has concentrated on four closely related aporias that any account of neighbor-love must address:

1. *The subject's metaphysical relation to others as originally absolutely egoistic or absolutely passive.*
As Outka shows, contra Levinas, this dilemma conflates an equal regard that seeks reciprocity with self-interested motivation.
2. *The appearance that individual encounter and universal justice are mutually exclusive and that agape can be aligned only with one.*
As Ricoeur shows, this dichotomy obscures the institutional or political dimension of agape. Moreover, as we have seen, in preserving the normative universality of neighbor-love by making it an encounter with pure alterity, Levinas loses the distinctive particularity of a concrete human other.
3. *The idea that impartial reason and partial appetite or inclination are our only options.*
As Stephen Ross notes, if alterity is pure infinity, it becomes a mysterious singularity (Ross 1996, 6). Yet Ross's alternative is to say that "[t]he Face . . . shows in virtue of corporeality" and to reconnect alterity with embodied touching and the fecundity of the "earth" (1996, 4). This proposal restores concreteness to the Other by making her an object of affectivity and emotion; as a result, the distinctive universality essential to neighbor-love is lost. Ross thus repeats what Grant rightly calls the error of displacing agape by eros (Grant 1996, 5). The difficulty is to restore the concreteness of the individual neighbor without lapsing into the partiality of feeling and corporeal emotion, or into the impartiality of abstract reason or deontic formalism.³⁸
4. *The dilemma of the Other as a overly personal alter ego or as an ultimately impersonal divine Anstoss.*
Agape is impossible if the neighbor is conceived either as the projection of empathetic feeling or as the *wholly other*. Likewise, the necessity of agape can be neither that of mutual compacts against misfortunes nor that of an arbitrary command of eschatological divinity.

The uniqueness of neighbor-love, properly understood, depends on its capacity to show that these are false dilemmas, that the options they

³⁸ See Outka's discussion of Von Hildebrand and the distinction between feeling and will necessary for agape ethics (Outka 1972, 125-30).

pose as dichotomous are not exhaustive.³⁹ The challenge for an adequate account of agape is to find a way through these antinomies. Our analysis of Levinas shows the direction in which the solutions lie, and in this regard, Levinas's efforts remain fruitful, despite their limitations. In particular, it is now clear that if others are to remain distinct as this or that other person within their alterity, their heteronomy must be conceived as *finite*: it must at least in principle be possible to bring them to some degree into mutuality—and human alterity cannot be conceived so absolutely that it excludes this possibility.

What we require is an interpretation in which alterity and empathy are equiprimordial at the metaphysical level. This will enable us to hold at the ethical level, as Outka suggests, that the possibility of *philia* is built into agape, even when agape must endure without reciprocity (Outka 1996, 37). The *moderated* asymmetry that Wingenbach finds in Heidegger's theme of liberatory solicitude comes closer to meeting this requirement: enclosure within the self is impossible, but the self "retains, because of this openness and the communal nature of the appropriation of possibilities, an ability to act for the Other without violating this asymmetry through domination and totalization" (Wingenbach 1996, 39). Otherwise we are forced to hold, with Levinas, that the Other can be respected in her alterity only when she is not originally understood, comprehended, or constituted in any way that involves active initiative on the part of the self entering the relation to its Other. Then, as we have seen, the Other is reduced to a pure trace of eschatological divinity.

An adequate account of agape thus depends on an account of personal hood that balances its constitutive intrasubjective and interpersonal conditions more carefully. It also depends on keeping in view the distinction between moral duty and eschatological hope or, in Kierkegaardian terms, between the ethical and religious modes of existence. The ethical significance of the person—and the correlated duty to him or her as neighbor—cannot spring solely from the person's eschatological sanctity or relation to the divinity who promises final justice. The relation of mortal persons to eschatological possibility is rather (as Kierkegaard and Heidegger saw) a basis for the individual's own purifying existential anxiety in his or her intrasubjective vocation. The

³⁹ In arguing that Christianity is devoid of the humanist love Nietzsche criticized and that we love the neighbor *only* for the sake of love for God, Max Scheeler highlighted a fifth dilemma that space does not permit me to explore in this essay: the tension between love for human beings and love for God (Scheeler 1961, 114). Levinas tries to correct the error in Scheeler's account by asserting that God is loved only by loving the neighbor, but this value is undermined because he leaves us no way of meeting the neighbor except as heterophany.

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demand that we love the other person as such, and the struggle to live up to this ideal, must already have meaning *before* eschatology can play its proper role of restoring hope beyond hope—that is, the "eucatastrophic" hope that, after all, the good may not be in vain (see Tolkien 1983, 153). For as Levinas himself emphasized, genuine neighbor-love is a motive prior even to the desire for our own salvation.

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