LEVINAS, VON BALTHASAR AND TRINITARIAN *PRAXIS*

Submitted by

Glenn Morrison BEc. BTheol [Hons] Theol.M

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School of Theology,
Faculty of Arts

Australian Catholic University,
Research Services
Locked Bag 4115,
Fitzroy, Victoria 3065
Australia

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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Signed: Glenn Morrison

Dated: 24/11/04

Synopsis

1. Aim

The thesis aims to explore Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy as a fertile resource for Christian theology. In this general context, we focus specifically on the way Levinas opens the possibility of a language of alterity, or radical "otherness", in theology, in a manner which escapes the limitations of such categories as objectivity, presence and Being. Recent attempts to employ Levinas' philosophy for the benefit of Christian theology have hesitated to go beyond onto-theology. This thesis, however, aims to show how Levinas' philosophy opens up a style of thinking and suggests a vocabulary of expression that can serve Christian theology, especially by intensifying its sense of encounter with Christ and of the Other in him. Accordingly, the thesis will make use of a number of Levinasian notions to critique and complement the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. This will lead to the development of what we call a "prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*".

2. Scope

The thesis firstly remarks on Christian theology's discovery of Levinas' philosophy. We then go on to introducing three of the major influences of Levinas' philosophy, namely Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Franz Rosenzweig. This will be followed by an introduction to the life of von Balthasar. But the major part of the thesis will be made up of three extensive explorations.

The first introduces a number of key terms and concepts in Levinasian thought, taking into account their possible contribution to the theology of von Balthasar. Here we examine especially the notions of "otherness" and "passivity".

The second exploration takes us into what might be called a recontextualisation of the major sections of von Balthasar's theology (aesthetics, dramatics and logic) through Levinasian analysis. We will concentrate especially on von Balthasar's treatment of Holy Saturday, the Resurrection, Trinitarian and Soteriological "Inversion", and truth as participation.

The third exploratory exercise attempts to develop a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*. Intrinsic to the very understanding of this Trinitarian *praxis* is the notion of alterity to such a degree that ethical transcendence is the very inspiration for theology if it is to go beyond the

limits of objectivity, Being and presence. This prolegomenon will, therefore, contain an articulation of Trinitarian *praxis* in the context of ethical transcendence, eschatology and soteriology. To this end, we employ Levinas' ideas of passivity and otherness to critique von Balthasar's eschatological conception of Christian existence and his soteriological understanding of the eucharist.

Because Levinas and von Balthasar have both used the writings of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig as sources, there will be abundant references to these writers at various junctures in this study. Likewise, the views of a number of Christian theologians who have been influenced by Levinas (Purcell, Ward, Barnes and Ford) will be critically examined.

3. Conclusions

The thesis concludes that, with the aid of Levinas' ideas, theology is offered the possibility of breaking out of the limits imposed by traditional notions of objectivity, Being and presence. In reaching such a conclusion, the thesis contests von Balthasar's prioritising of the beautiful by resituating his use of analogical thought. In this context, our study suggests new ways of speaking of Holy Saturday and the Resurrection, in a non-phenomenal manner. It means developing a theology of Gift to understand the unity between Christ's *missio* and *processio*. Here we highlight the deepest problem to be faced by a theo-logic as one of giving priority to the ethical over the ontological. In short, the thesis argues for a conception of Christian life that goes beyond the categories of ontology and experience. From what we have learned from Levinas, we propose a notion of Trinitarian *praxis* in which we come to God by way of ethical transcendence.

Additional Publications

1. "Trinitarian Theology via Levinas' Non-Phenomenology". *Sophia* 42:2 (Oct, 2003), 79-97.
2. "Emmanuel Lévinas and Christian Theology". *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68:1 (Spring, 2003), 3-24.
3. "A Review of Michael Purcell's Theological Development of Levinas' Philosophy. *The Heythrop Journal* 44:2 (April, 2003), 147-166.
4. "Jewish-Christian Relations and the Ethical Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas: 'At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible'." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38:2-3 (Spring-Summer, 2001), 316-329.
5. "'God Writes Straight with Crooked Lines': Eros, Agape and the Witness of Glory. An Encounter Between the philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas and Feminist Liberation Theology." *Colloquium* 33 (May, 2001), 23-37.
6. "Sacred Feelings: Lévinas and the Universe. Unlocking the mystery of the *there is [il y a]*". *Australasian Catholic Record* (April, 2001), 153-162.
7. "In Your Face I Hear the Word of God: Lévinas and the Trinity." *Compass Theological Review* (Spring, 2000), 22-24.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Philosophy and Christian Thought

In the history of Christian thought, Christianity in the past drew upon the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. In more recent times, however, it turned to the continental philosophy of, say, Immanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida for inspiration. This recent development has produced, what might be called, a post-metaphysical theology and a decontructive theology.[1] Post-metaphysical theology is perhaps best exemplified by the writings of Jean-Luc Marion.[2] Decontructive theology has tended to show much interest in associating Karl Barth's theology with Derrida's idea of deconstruction.[3] Both of these theologies seem to overlap in their critique of such ideas as Being, objectivity, subjectivity, presence, gift and onto-theology. An illustration of these new theological styles are the volumes coming out of two conferences, one held at Villanova University on September 25-27, 1997, entitled "Religion and Postmodernism,"[4] and the other held at Sundance, Utah in July, 2001, entitled "Religion after Onto-Theology".[5]

Today, there is evidence of a further development of post-metaphysical and decontructive theology, or perhaps of a rediscovery of dimensions of the past as Christian theologians are deeply involved with the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. This parallels to some degree the influence of Moses Maimonides on Aquinas.[6] What is surprising is that the Husserlian phenomenological tradition has played an

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[1] See for example, Kevin J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[2] See Thomas A. Carlson, "Postmetaphysical Theology," in Vanhoozer, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, 58.

[3] Graham Ward, "Decontructive theology," in Vanhoozer, *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, 82. See for example: Richard Roberts, *Theology on its Way? Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991); Stephen Webb, *Refiguring Theology: The Rhetoric of Karl Barth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Walter Lowe, *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Isolde Andrews, *Deconstructing Barth: A Study of Complementary Methods in Karl Barth and Jacques Derrida* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); and Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[4] See John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, The Gift and Postmodernism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[5] See Mark A. Wrathall (ed.), *Religion After Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[6] Alexander Broadie, "Maimonides and Aquinas," in Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman (eds.), *Routledge History of World Philosophies, Vol. 2, History of Jewish Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), 281.

important role in making the writings of Jewish and Christian thinkers more available for each other by giving them a common point of reference. Another important factor has been Jewish-Christian friendship after World War Two.[7] These two factors have influenced the context of positive exchange in recent years – in a manner that contrasts to the first and second centuries of the Common Era when the Christian movement competed with the emergent Rabbinic Judaism.[8]

The interest of Christian theologians in Jewish thought is especially found in the growing attraction of Levinas' ethical metaphysics. Admittedly, the dialogue between ethical metaphysics and theology is not new. Kant himself, by advocating an ethical theology,[9] had pointed to the need for Christian theology to be complemented by ethical metaphysics. Levinas' writings also echo much of Kant's polemical critique of morality, reason and theology, even if rejecting his reconstruction of metaphysics.[10] But Levinas' development of metaphysics beyond the thought of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig has proved to be of special interest, especially in the domain of ethics.

Furthermore, recently in France, Dominique Janicaud in his study of "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology" has questioned Levinas' "phenomenological coherence".[11] He challenges the "theological swerve" not only in Levinas, but also in the second generation of French phenomenologists, namely, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien and Michel Henry. For Janicaud, the scientific

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[7] See Emmanuel Levinas, "Judaeo-Christian Friendship," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, translated by Seán Hand (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 202. According to Levinas, the crucial point turning point for Jewish-Christian friendship is firstly, for Christians to respect that Jews "are significant to the future and to life," and secondly, for Christians "to go beyond respect for Jews and one day come to respect Judaism itself". Furthermore, In his essay, "Beyond Dialogue," Levinas exemplifies Jewish-Christian friendship after World War Two by stating, "The ten points of Seelisberg – approved in July, 1947 by an international conference against anti-Semitism – the twentieth anniversary of which we are celebrating today, is addressed to Christians." See Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, translated by Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 79.

[8] Harold W. Attridge, "Christianity from the Destruction of Jerusalem to Constantine's Adoption o the New Religion: 70-312 C.E.," in Hershel Shanks (ed.), *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development* (Washington DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1993), 163.

[9] See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, translated with analytical indexes by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 162-3.

[10] Arnulf Zweig (ed.), *The Essential Kant* (New York: A Mentor Book, 1970) 14, 24.

[11] See Dominique Janicaud, translation by Bernard G. Prusak, "The Theological Turn of French Philosophy," in Dominique Janicaud et. al., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn", The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 16-103.

method of Husserlian phenomenology should not be "intimidated" by theology in its "postmetaphyiscal" guise or "non-phenomenological, metaphysical desire".[12] He considers Levinas' transgression of phenomenology to be a "hermeneutical violence" especially in its attempt to signify the "Most High" and to replace Being [*Être*] "on the 'good' side by the Other [*Autre*]".[13] However, he admits that his study is a preliminary report. Accordingly, it indicates that the debate on the theological turn of French phenomenology must continue.[14]

Levinas is a French philosopher and Talmudic scholar. Let us briefly look at the connection between his life and work. Speaking Russian, German, and French, as well as reading and translating from the Talmud in Hebrew, he had immersed himself in the literature and writings of these traditions. Given these influences, Levinas also states that his life and work, "is dominated by the presentiment and memory of the Nazi horror".[15] The tragic events of World War Two had their decisive influence. Levinas' parents and brothers were murdered by Nazi collaborators in Lithuania. Though his wife and daughter found shelter "under the black cloak",[16] Levinas noted that the perpetrators of these massive evils were those who had once been baptised as Christians.[17] He himself was imprisoned in stalag no. II B – a camp for military prisoners containing other Jews and at least two Catholic priests – in northern Germany where he did forced labour in the forest as a woodcutter.[18] There, the original lines of his phenomenology began to take shape, to be eventually published in 1947. The title of this work, *De l'existence à l'existant*[19], was understood to be "programmatic and provocative"[20]. It was programmatic because it contains many of the nascent ideas in Levinas' unique phenomenology. It was also provocative

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[12] See Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"*, 27.
[13] See Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"*, 27, 28, 39.
[14] See Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"*, 17, 103.
[15] See Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 291.
[16] The term, "black cloak", is an amicable reference to the clergy, religious and laity of the Catholic faith who risked their lives to save Jews during World War Two.
[17] Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of Nations*, translated by Michael B. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 162.
[18] See Marie-Anne Lescourret, *Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 120. The door of the stalag carried the number 1492 signifying the date of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. See also Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 6. Levinas relates this experience in his essay, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," in Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 152-3.
[19] Translated as *Existence and Existents* by A. Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).
[20] Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Levinas*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993), 4.

because existence, in the Heideggerian sense, had been shown to be so massively alien to so many millions of "existents". Rather than basing his thought on Being or "existence" in general, Levinas understood that the life of truth begins with responsible existents.[21]

Given his familiarity with Judaism and Western philosophy, one could well ask whether he set out to translate his Judaism and memory of the Nazi horror into contemporary philosophy. Certainly, his philosophical discourse culminated in a phenomenology peculiarly sensitive to the sufferings of life, and contributed to the development of Jewish Humanism. The process of this development led to his *doctorat d'État,*[22] *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority.* This study gained him international recognition beyond the philosophical scene in Paris where he was known and respected within his intimate circle, made up of such thinkers as Maurice Blanchot, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Wahl and others.[23] Many publications, interviews and lectures followed, with his work translated into other languages. Thereafter his academic career led to positions at the Universities of Poitiers and Paris-Nanterre, and from 1973, at the Sorbonne. Here, Levinas' second major work, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974) appeared. It goes beyond the project begun in *Existence and Existents* and carried forward by *Totality and Infinity*, to focus on the subject of a truly ethical metaphysics.[24]

In recent times, a growing number of authors, namely Michael Purcell, Adriaan Peperzak, Graham Ward, David Ford, Michael Barnes, Paul Ricoeur, Marie Baird, Terry Veiling, Stephen Curkpatrick, Roger Burrgraeve, Stephen Webb, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion, Robyn Horner, Richard Kearney and Michele Saracino have begun to refer to Levinas' thought to the benefit of Christian theology.[25] And among these

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[21] Peperzak, *To the Other*, 5.
[22] "The *doctorat d'Etat* is the doctor's degree granted by the nation, not by a university. It often leads to a professorship at a French University." Peperzak, *To the Other*, 5.
[23] Peperzak, *To the Other*, 5-6.
[24] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 142.
[25] See Michael Purcell, "Leashing God With Levinas: Tracing a Trinity with Levinas," *The Heythrop Journal* XL (July, 1999) 301-318; Adriaan T. Peperzak, "The Significance of Levinas's Work for Christian Thought," in Jeffrey Bloechl (ed.), *The Face of the Other & The Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 184-199; Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*; David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of*

authors, Purcell, Ward, Barnes, Ford, and Saracino have most related Levinas' ideas to particular theologians and or saints. For example, with reference to Levinas' philosophy, Purcell engages the theological writings of Karl Rahner, Ward turns to those of Karl Barth, Barnes refers to Paul Ricoeur's and to the life of Roberto de Nobili, while Ford's frame of reference includes Eberhard Jüngel, Paul Ricoeur, St. Thérèse of Lisieux and Dietrich Bonhoeffer; and, Saracino compares the thinking of Levinas and Bernard Lonergan. In short, there have been a number of attempts to enrich Christian theology, *praxis*, dialogue and spirituality from Levinasian resources.

Yet while all of these attempts appeal to Levinas for inspiration, I would argue that they none the less limit his thought by reading him in a way that is too dependent on the categories of objectivity, Being and presence. Let us look briefly at Levinas' conception of these categories.

Levinas defines objectivity as "Being's essence [the event of Being] revealed in truth".[26] In short, objectivity is knowledge.[27] Because Being, in the Heideggerian sense of disclosed Being depends on consciousness, Levinas argues that objectivity distorts truth.[28] The distortion occurs when consciousness is reduced to an ideological obscuration of Being's essence. In other words, the subjectivity of the subject is absorbed and enclosed by the objectivity of Being. This suggests that subjectivity (as intelligibility) is subordinated to objective propositions of experience, that is, to the

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Religions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blaney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Marie Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology in light of Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics of Responsibility," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Summer-Fall, 1999) 340-351; Terry Veiling, "In the Name of Who? Levinas and the Other Side of Theology," *Pacifica* 12 (October, 1999), 275-292; Stephen Curkpatrick, "*Infinity, Insomnia*, and the (im)possibility of Theology," *Pacifica* 17:1 (February, 2004), 15-33; Roger Burrgraeve, "The Bible Gives to Thought: Levinas on the Possibility and Proper Nature of Biblical Thinking," in Bloechl (ed.), *The Face of the Other & The Trace of God*, 155-183, Stephen Webb, "The Rhetoric of Ethics as Excess: A Christian Theological Response to Emmanuel Levinas," *Modern Theology* (January, 1999) 1-16; John Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a future Trinitarian Metaphysic," in L. Gregory Jones and Stephen E. Fowl, (eds.), *Rethinking Metaphysics,* Directions in Modern Theology (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 119-161; Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, translated by Stephen Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Robyn Horner, "Emmanuel Levinas: God and Philosophy," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 7:1 (Spring, 2002), 41-46; Richard Kearney, "Desire of God," in Caputo and Scanlon, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, 112-145; and Michele Sarachino, *Openness as gift: Subject and Other in postmodern context. A Study of Lonergan and Levinas*, Marquette University (UMI Dissertation Library, 2000).

[26] Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 3, 131.

[27] See Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift. Marion, Derrida, and the limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 56.

[28] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 98-100.

totality of egoisms struggling with others.[29] This gives subjectivity a transcendental status (for it is subordinated to Being's essence).[30] Furthermore, such transcendental subjectivity signifies presence, "the fact-of-Being", in which the ego reduces its subjectivity with others to its own experience or re-presentations (lived experiences).[31] In this context, presence is that which encompasses, absorbs and encloses things and consciousness.[32]

It might seem like a harsh criticism of such eminent scholars as Purcell, Ward, Barnes, Ford, and Saracino to argue that they rely too heavily upon the categories of objectivity, Being and presence. But it remains that these writers have not been able to resolve the problem of the non-ontological basis of theology. Purcell has emphasised the need of "***being*** otherwise than Levinas' comprehension of Being" to such a point as to speaking of "The Goodness of Being".[33] In a similar vein, Ward finds that Levinas' idea of otherwise than Being implicitly espouses the analogy of Being.[34] Barnes is perhaps more straightforward on Levinas' idea of alterity when he states, "... it is impossible to speak of a relationship with what is other without dropping back into the language of totality".[35] In contrast to Purcell, Ward and Barnes, Ford points to how Levinas' thought has been woven into his own thinking "in ways too pervasive to trace".[36] Nevertheless, it is obvious enough that he has used Levinas' thought to construct analogies speaking of Christian life, such as the analogy of joyful obligation.[37] This could well seem like a reduction of Levinas' thought to onto-theology, that is, to the theological understanding of the relation between beings and God.[38] Finally, at the end of her thesis, Saracino questions Levinas' rejection of

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[29] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 99 and Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 3-4.
[30] Unless otherwise stated, I will refer to transcendental in the sense of its relation with Being or as quality of Being. Robyn Horner also points to two other sense of transcendental: "the transcendental in Kant's sense is that which 'establishes, and draws consequences from, the possibility and limits of experience.' The transcendental in Derrida's sense (to which we should rightly refer as the quasi-transcendental) is the condition of possibility and impossibility for meaning, which, without delaying further with the details here, is infinite interpretability". See Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 71.
[31] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 151 and Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 157.
[32] See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 133-134 and Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 58.
[33] See Michael Purcell, *Mystery and Method: The Other in Rahner and Levinas* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), 297, 329.
[34] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 184-185.
[35] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 97.
[36] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 32.
[37] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 162.
[38] The idea of onto-theology is complex. Peperzak gives two senses: Onto-theo-logy refers to "the relations between beings and God" whilst onto-theology stresses "a theological conception on the being

Being in a semantic sense by suggesting that the ethical structure of for-the-Other implies "being" for-the-Other.[39]

Looked at as a whole, it seems to me that these scholars cannot wholly accept the Levinasian argument against onto-theology. For Levinas, the word "God" is contaminated by objective propositions of the totality of Being. Being is a totality because its essence is disclosed as truth. In another sense, this is the logic of experience reducing the word "God" to a presence in consciousness.[40] Accordingly, I will be endeavouring to indicate that though such authors have no doubt discovered Levinas' ethical metaphysics as a valuable resource for theology, they have not used it to develop theology beyond their own ontological and phenomenal contexts. If this is the case, it would suggest that the approaches they represent are largely dependent on the primacy of *theoria*, Being and experience. As a result, their conceptions rely on a kind of transcendental consciousness, phenomenal experience and analogical thinking that Levinas would in fact reject. Because they emphasise either the personal experience of consciousness or the Good in Being, their discourse relating to God, humanity and the world is ultimately reduced to the explanations and proofs of theory, with its attendant notions of presence and experience. In stark contrast, Levinas has challenged both the quest for the meaning of Being and the primacy of lived experience. This is to say that his philosophy puts into question theology's attempt to aestheticise and even ethicise ego-consciousness. For him, it is the person and not a theory that has priority.

As with the writers I have referred to, I have found that the writings of Emmanuel Levinas contain many ideas of value for Christian theology. But in order to appreciate Levinas' thought, we cannot ignore what he means when speaking of responsibility for the Other beyond the categories of objectivity, presence and Being. Though drawing on Levinas' ideas, we shall see that Purcell, Ward, Barnes and Ford are not prepared to sever their ties with ontology (the search to understand the meaning of Being), intentionality (consciousness itself) and hence, analogy (a method

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(*to einai, das Sein*) of all beings (*to on*)". See Adriaan Peperzak, "religion after onto-theology," in Wrathall, *Religion After Metaphysics*, 120. In regards to the notion of "b/Being", I will throughout the thesis refer to its ontological sense as "Being" (*Être*) and to its ontic sense as "being" (*étant*).

[39] See Saracino, *Openness as Gift*, 241-242.

[40] See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, xlviii, 3, 29, 162.

using the categories of Being and consciousness to make rational statements concerning God, humanity and the world).[41] But despite their reluctance to accept the full logic of Levinas' approach, we can ask why is it that the logos, the very discourse of reason, should be confined to notions of Being and presence? Clearly, it will be my argument that theology must conceive of the logos beyond Being and presence. If the word "God" is going to be pronounced, a difficult condition of alterity is demanded, which, in turn, will demand that *theoria* and *praxis* must coincide. In a Levinasian sense, alterity or otherness refers to being made responsible by the Other to such a degree that it overwhelms the intentionality of consciousness. As a result, the self is obliged to sacrifice for the Other to the point of expiation.

Analogy and the categories of objectivity, presence and Being provide much of the language of onto-theology with the aim to make the mystery of God comprehensible. The use of analogy, despite its enriching qualities, retains the risk of thematising and limiting the divine to the realm of the human senses. In this regard, objective propositions might not necessarily be a disclosure of divine truth, but the language of totality, that is, the quest to uncover the meaning of Being. For Levinas, such a quest results in an anonymous experience. It is a depersonalising presence because any attempt of subjectivity is ultimately thwarted by the ego-centrism of the self. For these reasons, the thesis aims to conceive of a *praxis*, an ethical Trinitarian existence or language of alterity in which the cries of the "widow, orphan and stranger" might be heard.

To do justice to Levinas' philosophy, demands that it must not read in accord with those totalising tendencies in Christian theology, namely ontology, analogy and intentionality, which the thesis will be arguing against. In the light of what we have provisionally defined as "alterity", our basic question will be in the development of this thesis: *How might Levinas' philosophy inspire a language of alterity for Christian theology?* This will mean, in due course, taking issue mainly with Purcell, Ward, Barnes and Ford. However, in regards to Saracino, I have found only one instance in which to take issue. This is because, for the most part, she compares Levinas with Lonergan's thought, leaving only a short analysis in her conclusion to

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[41] For a discussion of the various meanings of analogy see Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 71, 97-98, 152.

evaluate how these two thinkers might enrich each other.[42] After these introductory remarks, I will now indicate the methodological structure of the thesis.

The thesis unfolds in three stages. The first stage (Chapter Two) will determine a number of main terms and concepts in the Levinasian vocabulary of alterity. Chapter's Three, Four and Five will read the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar in the light of this different kind of language. Finally, Chapter Six will set out to articulate a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*, with an explicit emphasis on the alterity of Christian theological discourse and method. Throughout these various chapters, the frame of reference will include not only the writings of Levinas' and von Balthasar's, but also the aspects of the philosophies of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Franz Rosenzweig which are relevant to our thesis and which have had considerable influence on the development of Levinas' thinking. But to come to grips with Levinas' philosophy and its potential applications for Christian theology, we will sketch the main features of his philosophical origins. This will be followed by a biographical sketch of von Balthasar's life and the influences to which he was subjected. These sketches will lead to further comment on the structure of the thesis.

Levinas' Philosophical Origins

The writings of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig together form the fertile ground in which Levinas' thinking took root and from which it grew. While Levinas incorporated many of their insights and developed many of their ideas in his distinctive fashion, there is always a recognisable and multi-faced dependence on their influence. For example, he will use Heidegger's thought to free himself from Husserl's phenomenology, and employ Rosenzweig's thinking to go beyond Heidegger's.[43] In some cases, Levinas' thought is clearly different from these three, as he comes up with new insights which owe their origins more to Plato, Descartes, Shakespeare, Blanchot, Levy-Bruhl, Dostoevsky, Vassily Grossman and Haim of

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[42] See Saracino, *Openness as Gift*, 236-243.

[43] Cohen writes in italics: "*Heidegger's ontology permits Levinas to see beneath the representational character of Husserl's phenomenology, true, but the ethics and justice of Rosenzweig's 'Star' permit him to see through the ontological character of Heidegger's regrounding of phenomenology*". See Richard A. Cohen, *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 236-237.

Volozhin.[44] But given that the writings of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig are the primary influences, I will seek to isolate the main points at which this influence is detectable. Let us begin with Husserl's contribution to Levinas' thought.

Husserl provides much of the phenomenological language of Levinas' ethical metaphysics. His phenomenology provides Levinas with both the language and some of the analytical resources necessary to articulate such notions as consciousness, experience, Being, truth and the other. Husserl is fundamentally concerned with how and why phenomena, including the phenomenon of the other, are intuited or approached. In the region of consciousness, intentional experiences (*Erlebnisse*) - such as perception, judgement, imagination and memory are always consciousness of something.[45] In his transcendental phenomenology, these *Erlebnisse* of intentional experience are the foundation for determining the meaning of truth and Being in an intersubjective world.

Levinas' philosophical discourse is a revolutionary development of Husserl's thought, especially in regard to the notion of experience as *Erlebnisse*. In this regard, as will be more fully explained later, Levinas will employ his distinctive notions such as encounter, approach, enigma, *illeity*, and so forth. Furthermore, in his post-phenomenological expressions he will employ such terms as the face, the Saying, diachrony, immemorial past, sacrifice, the Infinite and otherwise than Being to mark his progress beyond Husserl. Here, a major contrast with Husserl is Levinas' emphasis on the ethical and alterity. For Levinas, consciousness instead of being consciousness of something is primarily non-intentional in the sense that it is not a lived state of experience so much as a state of being overwhelmed by the Other. The passive or receptive character of consciousness is thus privileged at the expense of intentional activity in the usual sense. Paradoxically, Levinas articulates the activity of consciousness as residing in an absolute passivity. In this regard, Levinas does not speak in Husserlian terms about the lived experience (*Vécu*) or experience

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[44] i.e. Plato's idea of the Good and myth of Gyges, Descarte's idea of the Infinite, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Blanchot's idea of the neuter, Levy-Bruhl's notion of participation, Dostoevsky's *The Karamazov Brothers*, Grossman's *Life and Fate* and Haim of Volozhin's *Nefesh ha'Haim*.

[45] David Woodruff Smith, "Mind and Body," in Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 328-329.

(*Expérience*) of the Other, but rather in terms of encounter (*Rencontre*), as will be explained later in Chapter Two.[46]

So far we have touched upon Levinas' post-phenomenological "inversion" of Husserl's thought. Consciousness of something that is turned "inside out" so that it is an absolute passivity. Ethically speaking, the approach of the Other determines the meaning of truth in an intersubjective world. Yet, before we can speak more about Levinas' developments, we must offer a preliminary remark on the influence of Heidegger and Rosenzweig. Let us proceed now to Heidegger and how his phenomenology grounded in ontology becomes an important bridge for Levinas to traverse and even to dismantle.

Levinas first encountered Heidegger and his work, *Sein und Zeit*, while studying at the University of Freiburg. Immediately, the work began to influence Levinas' doctoral dissertation on "The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology".[47] However, the event of decisive influence for Levinas' relationship to Heidegger was the German philosopher's "unthinkable"[48] relationship with Hitlerism, beginning in 1933. Up to this point, Levinas had continued to admire Heidegger's philosophy, but his collaboration with the National Socialists in 1933 was an intense shock, especially with the infamous rectorial address in the same year. His rupture with Heidegger proved to be a turning point in Levinas' philosophical development. From then on, he was intent on refuting the philosophy of his former mentor. After once deeming Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* as among the five greatest works of Western Philosophy,[49] Levinas now found in Heidegger an increasingly pagan manner of thinking. In the wake of Heidegger's intimate involvement with Nazism, he began to see how his

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[46] See Levinas' two essays, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" 7-10 and "Enigma and Phenomenon," 65-77 in Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*.

[47] Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, translated by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 39. In reply to Philippe Nemo's question about *Sein und Zeit*, Levinas replies, "The work that I did then on "the theory of intuition" in Husserl was thus influenced by *Sein und Zeit*, to the extent that I sought to present Husserl as having perceived the ontological problem of being, the question of the status rather than the quiddity of beings. ... In *Sein und Zeit*'s analyses of anxiety, care and being-toward-death, we witness a sovereign exercise of phenomenology."

[48] Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 38.

[49] The other four works are "Plato's *Phaedrus*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*". Peperzak, *To the Other*, 4.

mentor was beginning to manipulate his philosophy for the cause of Germany's spiritual destiny.

If Heidegger was concerned with the spiritual destiny of Germany, Levinas was concerned with the spiritual destiny of European civilisation. The impact of the horrific events from 1933-1945 affected profoundly Levinas' judgement of Heidegger's whole project. Levinas began "to think otherwise" as far as Heidegger's notion of Being was concerned. For example, in the programmatic work, *Existence and Existents*, Levinas defines the meaning of Being in General ("the idea of the cause of existence")[50] as anonymous Being or the "there is" (*il y a*). As a result of Being's anonymity, and the strangeness with which it seeks us out like the night's "suffocating embrace",[51] there is no future in questioning of the meaning of Being in general. No response is possible. Being remains "alien". [52] In reaction to the anonymity and strangeness of Being, Levinas begins to move away from the phenomenological truth of Being, and into an horizon containing a Platonic notion of the good, namely the good beyond Being. We see this idea at work in his two major works, *Totality and Being: An Essay on Exteriority* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Now, let us turn to Rosenzweig's thought as the final, major influence upon Levinas' own thought.

Outside the tradition of phenomenology, we find another major influence, namely the life and writings of Franz Rosenzweig, a German-Jewish thinker. His major work, *The Star of Redemption*, is a complex interweaving of epistemological, ontological and theological concerns. It explores the realms of politics, aesthetics and religion from pagan and Jewish-Christian perspectives. The book interrelates the three primordial elements, God, the world and humanity, and connects these with the three "dimensions of temporality",[53] namely, Creation, Revelation and Redemption. With each of these topics representing a point on the star, together they form the "Star of Redemption".

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[50] Emmanel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, translated by A. Lingis (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 17.
[51] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 23.
[52] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 23.
[53] Emmanuel Levinas, "Foreword," in Stéphane Mosès, *System and Revelation: The philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, translated by Catherine Tihanyi (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 15.

Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* has played an important role for Levinas, especially by inspiring him to shape his departure from Heidegger's way of thinking. Levinas had been impressed by Rosenzweig's rejection of the Idealistic, pagan world of thought and the consequent totality of Being, for the sake of a messianic and eschatological idealism based on Judaism and Christianity. There is an important movement away from the totality of God, Man and the World (where "God appears to be concealed, man secluded, the world enchanted" [54]) to their reciprocal interrelationships signified by the theological notions of Creation, Revelation and Redemption. Here we see a "shattering of Being"[55] where the primordial elements (God, the world and humanity) are set free from their Western cultural milieu and liberated from the consequent temptations of paganism, politics and aesthetics. However, Levinas saw what Rosenzweig failed to see, namely, that he has replaced one system of totality, that is, a messianic theory of Redemption.[56]

Accordingly, Levinas strives to re-work many of the elements in Rosenzweig's new system of Idealism and totality. His writings take on both a Jewish and Christian perspective in the Rosenzweigian sense. By advocating an eschatological and messianic vision that encompasses all humanity, he overcomes Rosenzweig's dualism between the 'eternal life' of Judaism and the "eternal way" of Christianity. Though for Levinas, the Jewish people are still the eternal people and those who *par excellence* live out the life of alterity, all peoples, nonetheless, bear an irrefragable and pre-original responsibility.[57] Like Rosenzweig, Levinas is casting himself as a biblical prophet. He is trying to awaken the consciousness of the West to that pagan and totalising behaviour that too often conceals God with thinking, secludes humanity in the darkness of violence and war, and enchants the world through the temptations of politics and aesthetics.

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[54] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, translated from the second edition of 1930 by William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 391.
[55] Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 53.
[56] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, translated by Michael B. Smith (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 61.
[57] Cohen writes, "But Levinas's though is also, from Rosenzweig's perspective, Christian, centrifugal as well as centripetal, a loving of others inspired by being loved, a global mission as well as an eternal people. Indeed, for Levinas, who nowhere expresses Rosenzweig's exclusionary commitments, these two moments are inseparable. Irreplaceable election of the self and responsiveness to the incomparable alterity of the other person are two aspects of the same ethics". See Cohen, *Elevations*, 299.

Levinas acknowledges his debt to Rosenzweig as the preface to *Totality and Infinity* attests: "We were impressed by the opposition to the idea of totality in Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung*, a work too often present in this book to be cited".[58] In fact, the influence of Rosenzweig's work resonates throughout the Levinasian oeuvre. We see this not just in the rejection of totality, but also in Rosenzweig's notion of the face, which Levinas develops in a post-phenomenological way, as will be explained in the next Chapter. Similarly, Rosenzweig's criticism of art and its aesthetical categories is taken over and deepened in Levinas' emphasis of alterity over eros.[59]

It remains that Rosenzweig's philosophy is original and far-reaching. It represents a prototype of Jewish thought and Christian theology in a situation of mutual enrichment. Whilst Levinas' philosophical discourse never seeks to replicate Rosenzweig's attempt to construct a twofold Jewish and Christian path towards redemption and eternal truth, he does seem to acknowledge Rosenzweig's understanding of Christianity's missionary dimension.[60] Levinas' ethical metaphysics and Talmudic writings concentrate more on transcending consciousness by an emphasis on a life of alterity as the "difficult freedom" characterising the practice of Judaism. Furthermore, Rosenzweig's openness towards Christianity whilst remaining Jewish figures in Levinas' thought as a moment of joyful hope as he himself continues in a path of reconciliation between Jews and Christians, especially in the aftermath of the *Shoah* - the very moment at which all was lost.[61] On the whole, Rosenzweig's inauguration of a Jewish-Christian theology has a strong influence upon the following generation of thinkers which would include Levinas in a special way. Rosenzweig's remarkable opus remains an outstanding resource for a theology rooted in Judaism, Christianity and modern continental thought.

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[58] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1996), 28.
[59] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous, Thinking-Of-The-Other*, translated by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 113.
[60] See Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, 61-63.
[61] See my article, "Jewish-Christian Relations and the Ethical Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas: "At the Very Moment Where All is Lost, Everything is Possible,"" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38:2-3 (Spring-Summer, 2001), 316-329.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

After indicating something of Levinas' life and philosophical concerns, we now turn to the other significant figure in this thesis. Hans Urs von Balthasar was born in Lucerne, Switzerland, on 12 August 1905. During his childhood and youth, he developed talents in music and literature.[62] Educated with the Benedictines and later the Jesuits, he finally matriculated at the University of Zürich in German Literature and Philosophy. From there, and later in Berlin and Vienna, he pursued doctoral studies on the subject of apocalyptic in German literature. After submitting his dissertation in 1929, he joined the Bavarian Province of the Society of Jesus to study for the priesthood.[63] He did his novitiate and philosophical studies in Pullach (near Munich, Germany) where he had a rather negative experience of neo-scholastic manuals.[64] However, during his theological formation in Fourvière (near Lyons, France), he encountered his Jesuit mentor, Henri de Lubac. Under his tutelage, von Balthasar developed a love for the Church Fathers. De Lubac introduced von Balthasar to the movement of *la nouvelle théologie* which set out to overcome the manual tradition of scholasticism and to return theology to its rich patristic heritage. As a result, von Balthasar undertook significant studies in patristics. This led to his early writings on Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395) and Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662).[65] In his free time, he read and translated contemporary French authors such as Paul Claudel, Charles Péguy, George Bernanos and Paul Valery.[66]

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[62] Von Balthasar's cousin provides some useful biographical details. He writes: "He came from an old patrician family in Lucerne which had given his hometown army officers, statesman, scholars and churchmen – abbots and abbesses, canons, and a Jesuit provincial of Mexico. His father, Oscar Ludwig Carl Balthasar (1872-1946), was a cantor *Baumeister*, responsible, among other things, for St. Karli Kirche, one of Switzwerland's pioneering modern church buildings. Through his mother, née Gabrielle Pietzcker (d. 1929), co-foundress and first general secretary of the Swiss League of Catholic Women, he was related to the Hungarian martyr-bishop, Apor von Györ, who was shot by Russian soldiers in 1944 for harbouring some women refugees in his house. His younger brother Dieter served as an officer in the Swiss Guard. His sister Renée (1908-1986) was Superior General, from 1971-1983, of the Franciscan Sisters of Saint Marie des Anges. He spent much of his childhood at the Pension Felsberg run by his grandmother, where cosmopolitan attitudes and trilingualism (German, French and English) were taken from granted. ... As Balthasar himself has testified, his childhood and youth were pervaded by music, for which he had quite an extraordinary talent". See Peter Henrici, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Sketch of his Life," *Communio* 16/3 (Fall, 1989), 307-308 in Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 1.

[63] See John O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 1-2.

[64] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 2.

[65] Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad. A Guide Through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1998), xiv. For example, *Kosmische Liturgie. Höhe und Krise des griechischen Welbilds bei Maximus Confessor* (Freiburg, 1941) and *Présence et penseée. Essai sur la philosopheie religieuse de Gregoire de Nysse* (Paris, 1942).

[66] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 3.

After priestly ordination on 26 July 1936, he worked for the Jesuit journal *Stimmen der Zeit* in Munich. During this time, a second crucial influence upon von Balthasar was the Jesuit, Erich Przywara, whom he met at Pullach. Von Balthasar once remarked that Przywara was the greatest mind he ever had encountered. Whilst shaping von Balthasar's philosophical inquiry especially in regards to the analogy of Being,[67] he led him to appreciate also the true depth of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Nichols remarks that, "Indeed, it might not be too misleading to say that what Przywara, and Balthasar after him, hoped to do was combine the mind of St. Thomas with the heart of St Augustine, all in the spirit if St Ignatius Loyola, that burning obedience – at once interior and missionary – to the Word of God".[68]

With the impending war, von Balthasar opted to return to Switzerland to take up the role of student chaplain at the University of Basel. It was here that he met Adrienne von Speyr and the systematic theologian, Karl Barth, two decisive influences upon the further direction of his work. Von Balthasar's admiration of Barth can be measured by his book, *The Theology of Karl Barth.*[69] He was attracted to Barth's theology, especially by his conception of what theology should be, namely, a revelation-centred theology.[70] In this regard, Barth held that the only true principle of theology was the analogy of faith, that is, all knowledge of God is derived from Christ. Despite Barth's adamant rejection of the analogy of Being, von Balthasar sought to implement Barth's Christocentric analogy of faith with the analogy of Being. Without the foundation of the analogy of Being, von Balthasar argued, Barth's analogy of faith would end up as a self-enclosed divine monologue.[71] Aware of the value of Barth's theology for Catholic theology, von Balthasar openly sought to convert his Swiss colleague to the Catholic view of things. His endeavours at conversion at Basel found more success in the case of Adrienne von Speyr.

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[67] O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 4.
[68] Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xiv.
[69] *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (Olten-Cologne, 1951); English translation: *The Theology of Karl Barth* (New York, 1971; San Francisco, 1992).
[70] Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xvi.
[71] See O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 4-5 and Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xvi.

Von Speyr, a twice-married medical doctor and Protestant, converted to Catholicism through von Balthasar's influence. Almost immediately, von Speyr began to share with him her mystical and theologically creative insights. Von Balthasar acknowledged her influence to the point of stating that it is impossible to separate her work from his, psychologically or philosophically.[72] John O'Donnell lists a number of theological themes which von Balthasar inherited from von Speyr:

> Christ's descent into hell as his solidarity with the abandoned, Jesus's Sonship as obedience to the point of powerless identification with the Godforsaken, faith as Marian womb-like receptivity, virginity as spiritual fruitfulness for the word, personhood as unique sending from God, the vicarious representative character of prayer and suffering in the Church, the bodiliness of Christian existence, the naked standing before God and the Church in the sacramental act of confession as expressing the fundamental Christian attitude.[73]

With von Speyr's encouragement and support, von Balthasar made the decision to found in 1945 a secular institute, the Community of St. John. One of its first apostolates was to establish the publishing house, *Johannes Verlag*, in Einsiedeln (situated about halfway between Lucerne and Zürich).[74] Eventually, von Balthasar was forced to make the heartbreaking decision to leave the Jesuits.[75] After several years of isolation, he was incardinated in 1956 in the Swiss diocese of Chur. But his struggle for recognition continued. Though he failed to be nominated as a "*peritus* (expert theologian)" for the Second Vatican Council, his work continued in the wake of the Council with his foundation of the journal, *Communio* – founded in opposition

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[72] Von Balthasar writes: "It was Adrienne von Speyr, who pointed out the fulfilling way from Ignatius to John, and thus laid the foundation for the most of what has been published by me since 1940. Her work and mine is neither psychologically nor philosophically separable, two halves of a whole which, as centre, has but one foundation". See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Rechenschaft 1965* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1965), 35, quoted in Medard Kehl and Werner Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1982), 42.

[73] O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 5.

[74] See Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 4 and Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xvii-xviii.

[75] In a statement to friends, von Balthasar writes: "I took this step, for both sides a very grave one, after a long testing of the certainty I had reached through prayer that I was being called by God to certain definite tasks in the Church. The Society felt it could not release me to give these tasks my undivided commitment. ... So, for me, the step taken means an application of Christian obedience to God, who at any time has the right to call a man not only out of his physical home or his marriage, but also from his chosen spiritual home in a religious order, so that he can use him for his purposes within the Church. Any resulting advantages or disadvantages in the secular sphere were not under discussion and not taken into account". See Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xviii. Nichols makes the note that this passage was "Cited in, Henrici, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar', in [D.L.] Schlinder (ed.), *Hans Urs von Balthasar. [His Life and Work* (San Francisco 1991)], p.21."

to the more liberal international journal, *Concilium*.[76] Despite ecclesiastical disfavour, von Balthasar was able to push ahead with his major writings, publishing works on literary figures and the first volumes of his trilogy.[77] After von Speyr's death in 1967 and with the post-conciliar crisis in Catholic theology, he received recognition from the Roman See, and was appointed to the International Theological Commission. His patristic-inspired, anti-liberal, yet reformist theology began to be adopted by Rome.[78] In the years that followed, von Balthasar's theological trilogy of the Aesthetic, Dramatic and Logic was completed, taking more that twenty-five years to complete. He died on 26 June 1988 at Basel, three days before his investiture as a cardinal.[79]

Levinas, von Balthasar and Trinitarian *Praxis*

Levinas is a philosopher in his own right, having traversed phenomenological, European and Judaic traditions to occupy and the ethical metaphysics he elaborated. His writings are never easy, given the complexity, enigma and rigour of his style. By relating his achievement to the equally difficult thought of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig, I hope to present his philosophy in a manner that will not only be an accurate interpretation of his thought, but will also be to the benefit of Christian theology. In this latter regard, I will be focusing on von Balthasar's trilogy of theological aesthetics, dramatic theory and logic.

Von Balthasar's theology has yet to be explored in its possible correlations to Levinas. Yet with its dramatic conception of the Trinity in relation to the Paschal Mystery, von Balthasar's theology promises many points of contact in a manner that might lead to its enrichment. His theology makes use of several Husserlian and Heideggerian ideas. To the degree this is critically recognised, opportunities emerge for a re-examination of such theology along the lines of an ethical metaphysics. Although both Levinas and von Balthasar draw from similar philosophical resources in the case of Husserl and Heidegger, their approaches do however seem to be dialectically opposed. On the

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[76] See Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 4-5.
[77] John Riches and Ben Quash, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," in David Ford, (ed.), *The Modern Theologians, An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), 135.
[78] Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xix and Riches and Quash, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," 135.
[79] Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, xix and Peter Henrici, "The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in David Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 199), 152.

one hand, von Balthasar shows an implicit acceptance of Husserlian ideas and an explicit interest in Heideggerian ones by incorporating elements of each into his theology. On the other hand, Levinas goes beyond these approaches, by pushing phenomenology to the limit, and by questioning the foundational position of ontology. By exploring and contrasting the positions of these two eminent thinkers, we hope to discover ways in which Christian theology can profit from a newer and more radical perspective.

As stated earlier in the chapter, the underlying question of this thesis is expressed as follows: *How might Levinas' philosophy inspire a language of alterity for Christian theology?* In grappling with this question, von Balthasar's theological attachment to analogy, subjective and objective experience, and to presence and Being must be called into question. To this end, the next chapter will introduce Levinas' philosophy and analyse a number of its key terms under some eleven headings: the *there is*; time, the Other, God, encounter, exposure, passivity, prayer, having a sense, truth and ethical transcendence. These Levinasian terms and notions, especially otherness and passivity, will be pressed into service in the chapters that follows. Furthermore, throughout Chapters Three to Six, I will provide a footnote for many of these Levinasian terms and notions for the purpose of cross-referencing them back to Chapter Two.

In my use of this extensive Levinasian vocabulary, I will certainly be intending to respect the original sense of these terms, notions, expressions, etc., in the ethical metaphysical discourse under consideration. Still, by employing such a vocabulary in an intensive theological and Christian context, the meaning of such terms will be developed in a new context, and to serve the theological aims of the thesis. In this way I will not seek to impose Christian thinking on Levinas' ethical metaphysics, but rather to promote a theology that can learn from Levinas' philosophy of alterity, and so re-conceive the transcendent Otherness with which theology deals, beyond the familiarising and powerfully traditional notions of objectivity, Being and presence.

Chapter Three gives a brief introduction to von Balthasar's trilogy of aesthetics, dramatics and logic. It discusses his dependence on the analogy of the transcendentals and the analogy of Being. By examining the structure of this

theological trilogy, we can perceive how it is founded on the analogy of the philosophical transcendentals, namely the beautiful, the good, the true and the one. For von Balthasar, though the transcendentals are in an indissoluble unity, he sees this unity as prioritising the beautiful, and hence suggesting what can be called "an aestheticisation of consciousness" which will be the special concern of Chapter Three, as it deals with von Balthasar's theological aesthetics.

Chapter Three will first provide an introduction to von Balthasar's theology, give particular points of contrast between Levinas and von Balthasar and finally suggest how von Balthasar's theology could profit from exposure to Levinas' thought. It will then focus on von Balthasar's treatment of the triune drama of Holy Saturday and of the Resurrection. Here, we will be arguing against the sense of the phenomenal and the transcendental by developing a non-phenomenality of Holy Saturday and of the Resurrection. It will be argued that Christ's Otherness and the depths of the Spirit, rather than analogical thought, are the place and time in which to conceive of *doxa*, the divine glory. By bringing out the non-phenomenal role of the Spirit and of Christ's Otherness, I will be suggesting a way of conceiving of dogma by way of the language of ethical transcendence. Theology must not begin with theory, but with the person of Christ if it is to be faithful to its own rationality when referring to the divine.

In moving further to the direction of theological alterity, Chapter Four introduces von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory. It isolates two theological themes pervading his analysis of theo-dramatic action, namely, "person and mission" and "gift-as-given and gift-as-received". Von Balthasar speaks of a Trinitarian and soteriological "Inversion", which accords a certain priority to the Spirit's operation in the Incarnation and in Christ's earthly life. By approaching this in a Levinasian framework, the chapter elaborates these themes and considers their interrelationship. It will be shown that von Balthasar's theology of gift can enrich his understanding of the unity between Christ's *processio* and *missio*. The Trinity can thus be conceived beyond essence by relating it to Christ's kenosis. For it is the Spirit's operation of the Son's humanity rather than any theory and or experience that provide the optics for grasping the character of the Son's self-gift for the world's salvation. This will disclose more adequately the genuine alterity of God's self-giving and self-revealing "otherness" in the life of faith.

Chapter Five examines von Balthasar's theological logical theory by focusing on the first volume, *Truth of the World.* It discusses four factors guiding his understanding of the role of truth in the event of God's revelation: 1. The truth of Being, 2. The analogy of Being and the analogy of the Transcendentals, 3. The connection between philosophy and theology and 4. Truth is grounded in love. The discussion of the four factors will be conducted by comparing von Balthasar's positions with those of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig to specify more accurately our Levinasian critique of von Balthasar's theo-logic. His notions of truth as participation and as the unconcealment of Being, and the analogies of Being and appresentation will be challenged. The aim of the chapter is to recontextualise von Balthasar's idea of truth with the aid of a Levinasian ethical metaphysics, so that this theo-logic will give the ethical priority over the ontological.

Chapter Six will set out to establish a Trinitarian *praxis* within the language of alterity. Trinitarian *praxis*, reconsidered in the light of Levinas' ethics, will necessarily be contrasted with Purcell's "Ethical Trinitarian Theology", Ford's "Theology of Being Transformed", Barnes' "Theology of Dialogue" and von Balthasar's eschatology and soteriology. The difference lies in understanding ethical Christian life and thought through the language of alterity, in contrast to the "totalising" tendencies detected in the authors just named. It will mean recontextualising eschatological existence and the soteriological dimensions of the eucharist in the place and time of ethical transcendence. In particular, Levinas' ideas of passivity and otherness will prove most helpful for an understanding of the encounter with Christ and of the Other in him.

In this way, the thesis aims, by way of Levinas' philosophy, von Balthasar's theology and several Christian readings of Levinas, to outline a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*. Ethical transcendence and the language of alterity open up new horizons for theological explorations. Levinas' philosophy provides a dialogical space for Christian theology and Jewish thought. But it points to a direction that goes even beyond dialogue, to a theologically understood ethic of responsibility. In the end, the thesis hopes to contribute to theology a way of understanding itself in the light of a personal encounter with Christ and the Other in Christ.

Chapter 2 Levinas' Philosophy

Introduction

The chapter provides a general presentation of Levinas' philosophy and proceeds to analyse a number of its key terms and notions under some eleven headings: the *there is*; time, the Other, God, encounter, exposure, passivity, prayer, having a sense, truth and ethical transcendence. These terms and notions, especially otherness and passivity, have been selected for the service in the chapters that follow.

Levinas' thought and style are, as all admit, of unusual difficulty. Adriaan Peperzak, to give but one instance, implies that it is impossible to arrive at a complete overall grasp of his thought.[1] But Richard Cohen argues against trying to simplify or systemise it, or even relate too quickly to other disciplines, lest it be reduced to the ordinary level of moral imperatives.[2] It seems clear that Levinas does not leave us with a body of thought or system in any recognisable sense, as though he was dealing with a particular theory or ethical project. It is more a deeply person-centred philosophy of moral conscience, developed in a context made up of a certain range of interlocutors. Clearly the conviction animating this thesis is that Levinas' thinking should not be "totalised" in its complexity, but be respected in its capacities to inspire fresh deconstructive possibilities in other disciplines, above all, in theology. My special concern will be in its pertinence to the theology of von Balthasar, no less a complex and many-faceted thinker than Levinas himself.

Levinas' philosophy articulates the reality of the moral conscience as the authentic path of human transcendence. In contrast, Husserl's phenomenology sought to discover how the mind might take responsibility for itself and for its own freedom by deepening its knowledge of things.[3] According to Levinas, Husserl believed that phenomenology was the realisation of the ideal of first philosophy. This is to say that phenomenology, as first

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[1] See Adriaan Peperzak (ed.), *Ethics as First Philosophy. The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 184.
[2] Richard A. Cohen, "Difficulty and Mortality: Two Notes on Reading Levinas," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 7:1 (Spring, 2000), 59-61.
[3] Emmanuel Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, translated by A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 48.

philosophy, is independent from any scientific theory, and further acts as a critique and foundation for all other forms of science.[4] Whereas, for Levinas, ethics is first philosophy: "The ethical, beyond vision and certitude, delineates the structure of exteriority as such. Morality is not a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy".[5] As he reflected on how Heidegger's fundamental ontology has revolutionised Husserl's intention of deepening our knowledge of the Being and truth of things, Levinas questioned the foundational status of ontology as well.[6] It is the ethical encounter with the Other that is primary. Levinas will go so far as describing the discourse between the self and the Other as prayer. This suggests that prayer and ethics are interwoven in Levinas' distinctive style of analysis of human existence. For example, on the one hand he writes that, "the essence of discourse is ethical," and, on the other, he states that, "the essence of discourse is prayer".[7]

As Levinas develops the phenomenological tradition, he is also subject to biblical influences. Indeed, Derrida has argued that messianic and eschatological thinking has inspired Levinas' thought.[8] In this regard, we have already mentioned the influence that Rosenzweig has had on his thinking. Yet Derrida is careful to point out that Levinas' messianic-eschatology should not be reduced to philosophical truisms, theology, Jewish mysticism, a dogmatics, a religion or a morality.[9] Derrida clearly understands Levinas' thought, not as a specific theory, but as a discourse focused on the encounter with the Other. This eschatological encounter is therefore described as a "naked experience," for it is not reducible to lived experience.[10] There is a strong sense of being beholden to the Other and of the connection between God and justice.[11] Furthermore, Levinas will at times refer to Isaiah or to Matthew 25 when speaking to Christians.[12] The general

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[4] Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, 17.
[5] See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 304,
[6] Emmanuel Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" in Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 11.
[7] See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 216 and Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 7.
[8] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated with an introduction and additional notes by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001), 103.
[9] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 103.
[10] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 103.
[11] See for example Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 160-162.
[12] For references to Isaiah, see for example Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 97. In regards to Matt 25, see Emmauel Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be? Interviews with Emmanuel*

context of his thought assumes a messianic-eschatology and an ethical metaphysics centred on the encounter with the Other. In a word, it is never far from prayer.

In a number of countries, especially Holland, Belgium, France, the United States, Italy and South America, Levinas' work has found its greatest readership among Christian philosophers and theologians.[13] Despite this intense interest, I have detected a tendency for Christian theologians to compromise Levinas' philosophy with an ontological, and hence analogical, approach which is foreign to it. For example, theologians like Ward and Purcell argue that Levinas' thought remains analogical.[14] Influenced by Derrida's critique of Levinas, Ward writes: "What is distinctive about Levinas's position is his castigation of binary oppositions – Same and Other, presence and absence. He wishes to construct analogies through a presence-by-absence".[15] And in another instance he says: "Despite, then, espousing Husserl's analogy of appresentation, Levinas cannot articulate such an appresentation without implicitly espousing the analogy of being".[16] Purcell too notes the same paradox in Levinas' writings. He states:

> ... Levinas refuses an ontological understanding of subjectivity and refuses Being as the appropriate or adequate category for articulating the relation between the same and the Other. Yet, the ethical relationship of the same to the Other must also in some sense be taken as analogical and for a number of reasons .... To speak meaningfully about responsibility and its demands, there must be some analogical sense in which the terms can be used".[17]

Both Ford and Purcell are convinced that Levinas employs analogy and hence the category of Being. In fact, Purcell will appeal to Ward for evidence.[18] Similarly, the approaches of Ford and Barnes are instances where Levinas' ideas are still not

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Levinas, edited by Jill Robbins (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 171. Here, he states: "When I speak to a Christian, I always quote Matthew 25: the relation to God is presented there as a relation to another person. It is not a metaphor; in the other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the other, I hear the word of God." See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 171.

[13] See Peperzak, "The Significance of Levinas's Work for Christian Thought," 184-185.

[14] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 183-186 and Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 308.

[15] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, footnote 9, 131.

[16] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 184.

[17] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 308.

[18] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 308.

sufficiently removed from the language of totality.[19] Whilst Ford is aware of Levinas' argument against totality, he none the less uses the language of totality to conceive of feasting as an analogy and as a personal experience of aesthetics to explain how the reality of God transcends all categories.[20] Referring to his conception of the metaphysics of feasting, Ford writes: "For this metaphysics the danger to which Levinas alerts us is that of a new totality. Feasting, however, allows for his ethical pluralism of being. There is no overview of all those encounters and conversations, but the feast can enact the union of substitutionary joy in the joy of others with substitutionary responsibility".[21]

Finally, following Derrida's argument against Levinas, Barnes states:

> Levinas' overcoming of ontology is dependent on the totalising ontology it seeks to overcome. ... Derrida's critique supports my basic contention that Levinas is locked into the terms of a phenomenology which risks a certain dualism. The problem for Levinas is that the one thing that the phenomenological method leads Husserl to assume – namely the possibility of an intentional consciousness by which the ego intuits the other through the means of analogical perception is the one thing that Levinas will not permit.[22]

Like Ward, Barnes finds Derrida's argument appealing. For Barnes, it is impossible to speak of the Other without using the language of totality. In fact, he will use the language of totality at times to speak of Levinas' thought. For example, using terms which Levinas himself would avoid, he describes Levinas' thought as "the presence of the other," "the experience of alterity" and "Levinas' project".[23] My case against Ward, Purcell, Ford and Barnes is that because they interpret Levinas' thought with reference to analogy, ontology and presence, they seek to develop Christian theology along these lines. I will be at pains to point out, especially in the final three chapters where such misinterpretations and misapplications occur. Accordingly, in Chapter Four I will refer

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[19] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 266-281 and Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 97.
[20] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 266-271.
[21] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 271. In another example, Ford has noted the lack of joy in Levinas' thought and endeavours to think otherwise by way of Jüngel's thought resulting in an analogy of joyful obligation. In this regard, Ford seems to have failed to appreciate the ethical-metaphysical significance of Levinas' writings as he speaks of joy analogically. See Ford, *Self as Salvation*, 74-79.
[22] Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 91-92.
[23] Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 92-94.

to Ward; in Chapter 5, I will engage Ward and Purcell; and finally in Chapter 6 I will address Purcell, Ford and Barnes.

Levinas' complex lexicon brims with new and suggestive terms. Many of them such as the *there is*, trace, diachrony, ambiguity, immemorial past, the face, the Other, otherness, *illeity*, the Saying, testimony, incarnation, God, encounter, passivity, substitution, expiation, sacrifice, gift, conscience, death, prayer, truth, transcendence and humiliation beg to be translated into a Christian theological context. In the chapters that follow I will employ and apply many of these terms for my theological purposes. But for now my task is more explanatory. Given the problem of terminological complexity, I will present the major items of the Levinasian vocabulary under some eleven headings. In attempting this somewhat schematic list, we can not only appreciate the difficulty and complexity of interpreting Levinas' vexingly idiosyncratic writings, but also go some way in isolating the meaning of these terms within the whole field of Levinasian discourse.

The *there is*

The *there is* remains one of the most enigmatic notions in the whole of Levinas' writings. In *Existence and Existents*, this notion occurs as Levinas contests Heidegger's analysis of Being and nothingness.[24] He reflects:

> Is not anxiety over Being – the horror of Being – just as primal as anxiety over death? Is not the fear of Being just as originary as the fear for Being? It is perhaps even more so, for the former may account for the latter. Are not Being and nothingness, which, in Heidegger's philosophy, are equivalent or coordinated, not rather phases of a more general state of existence, which is nowise constituted by nothingness? We shall call it the fact that *there is*.

Where Heidegger associates anxiety with death, Levinas interprets anxiety as the horror of Being.[25] For him, Being is both a grim and menacing notion. Being-in-the-world is an experience of horror, fear and anxiety; a frightful occurrence of violent inhumanity. We can well imagine that such an experience of Being was all too familiar to him during the

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[24] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 20.
[25] Levinas reflects: "Horror is nowise an anxiety about death". See Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 61.

time of captivity in a German stalag,[26] and that he is reacting against the Nazi Heidegger's political stance.[27]

In describing Being in terms of fear and horror, an anonymous and depersonalised state of existence, his phrase, the *there is* connotes an "existence without existents".[28] He considers the existent[29] as a personal subject who has taken up a position towards the *there is*. In an attempt to articulate the *horrible* experience of Being without existents, Levinas employs the phrase, the *there is*, an impersonal and anonymous (verbal) form. In this regard it is similar to "it rains" or "it is warm".[30] As the horror that strips consciousness of its subjectivity, the *there is* depicts a frightening ambiguity: the inability

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[26] From the background of being regarded as a non-existent without a name while in captivity, Levinas laments: "In horror a subject is stripped of his subjectivity, of his power to have private existence. The subject is depersonalised. 'Nausea,' as a feeling for existence, is not yet a depersonalisation; but horror turns the subjectivity of the subject, his particularity qua *entity*, inside out. It is a participation in the *there is* which returns in the heart of every negation, in the *there is* that has 'no exits.' It is, if we may say so, the impossibility of death, the universality of existence even in its annihilation." Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 61. See also Levinas' essay, "The Name of A Dog, or Natural Rights," in Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 151-153, where Levinas speaks of the experience of being stripped from one's human skin and of only having one's humanity recognised by "the last Kantian in Nazi Germany," a dog called Bobby.

[27] Levinas writes: "We know what Heidegger was in 1933, even if he was so during a brief period, and even if his disciples – many of who are estimable – forget about it. For me, it is unforgettable. One could have been everything except Hitlerian, even if it was inadvertent". See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 94. Caputo, who uses Levinas' writings to demythologise Heidegger' thought, points out: "...what Heidegger regards as the inner truth of the spiritual relationship of Greek and German, which in 1933 is Heidegger's attempt both to elevate Nazi mythology to the level of metaphysics and to give a deeper, spiritual mooring to the revolution, is a "truth" that Heidegger never renounced". See John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 5.

[28] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 57. "Existence without existents" refers to the experience of existence before taking up any position in life.

[29] Edith Wyschogrod describes the existent/the being/the entity (*l'étant*) as "Comparable to Heidegger's *Seiendes* but used by Levinas to designate the other person to whom one relates prior to an understanding of being, the other who is one's interlocutor". See "Key to Special Terminology" in Edith Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas. The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). Levinas also uses the term, *l'existant*, to designate the self's hypostatic state of existence. In an attempt that overshadows Heidegger's ontological phenomenology, he describes the existent as a consciousness, an event and a hypostasis: "Consiousness, position, the present, the "I," are not initially – although they are finally existents. They are events by which the unnameable verb *to be* turns into substantives. They are hypostasis." The difference between '*l'etant*' and '*l'existant*' is unclear. However, Levinas seems to associate his new phenomenological analysis with the term, '*l'existant*' in order perhaps to disassociate himself from Heidegger's emphasis on ontology. Notice how Levinas describes 'l'existant' as a hypostatic event whereby the consciousness of the I moves its position away from the 'there is' (Being in general or the unnameable verb *to be*) towards a new subjectivity that points to a horizon of freedom, responsibility and hope. In *Existence and Existents*, hypostasis is understood as a twofold passage, from an egotistical existence of indolence and fatigue to an ethical existence of responsibility for the other and hope. See Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 82-83, 92-93.

[30] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 58.

to ascertain the presence or absence of anything.[31] Levinas writes, that as "a presence of absence, the *there is* is beyond contradiction; it embraces and dominates its contradictory. In this sense being has no outlets". In a metaphorical mode, he aptly depicts the experience of the *there is* as the horror of the night.[32]

Levinas is here indebted to Maurice Blanchot's description of "the neuter", particularly in the novel, *Thomas l'Obscure*,[33] and also, to a lesser extent, to Levy-Bruhl's sense of "participation".[34] There is also an anti-Heideggerian factor. For example, in contrast to *Dasein*'s being thrown into the 'there", and being sucked into the turbulence of the "they-self",[35] Levinas' formulation of the menacing *there is* sounds more like as shattering such an analysis of inauthentic existence, and the notion of Being as "gifting". The horrible eternity of the *there is* calls into question any attempt to derive meaning from Being.[36] This is one aspect of his attempt to prioritise ethics over any fundamental ontology – or over any other theory of Being.[37] I would suggest, therefore, that Levinas attempts to

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[31] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 64.

[32] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 62.

[33] See Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 63 ftn. 1. In the footnote Levinas points out: "(Cf., in particular Chapter II, pages 13-16). The presence of absence, the night, the dissolution of the subject in the night, the horror of being, the return of being to the heart of every negative movement, the reality of irreality are there admirably expressed". In a conversation with Phillipe Nemo on the *there is*, Levinas states, "It is a theme I have found on Maurice Blanchot, even though he does not speak of the 'there is,' but of the 'neutral' or the 'outside.' He has a number of suggestive formulas: he speaks of the 'hustle-bustle' of being, of its 'clamour,' its 'murmur.' A night in a hotel room where, behind the partition, 'it does not stop stirring'; 'one does not know what they are doing next door.' This is something very close to the 'there is.'" See Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 50-51.
The following example from *Thomas the Obsucre* exemplifies how close Blanchot's idea of *the neuter* – exemplified by 'the night' - is to Levinas' conception of the *there is*: "I discover my being in the vertiginous abyss where it is not, an absence, an absence where it sets itself like a god, I am not and I endure. An inexorable future stretches forth infinitely for this suppressed being. ... Here is the night. The darkness hides nothing. My first perception is that this night is not a provisional absence of light. For from being a possible locus of images, it is composed of all that which is not seen and is not heard, and listening to it, even for a man would know that, if he were not a man, he would hear nothing. In true night, then, the unheard, the invisible are lacking, all those things that make the night habitable. It does not allow anything other than itself to be attributed to it; it is impenetrable". See Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, New Version, translated by Robert Lamberton (New York: D. Lewis, 1973), 104.

[34] See Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 60. I shall defer a discussion of Levy-Bruhl's influence to later in the chapter.

[35] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 223. See also Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, The Blackwell Philosophical Dictionaries (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 219.

[36] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 176.

[37] Levinas reflects: "To Heidegger, being-with-the-other-person – *Mitteinandersein* – thus rests on the ontological relation. We reply: Is our relation with the tother a *letting be*? Is not the independence of the

revise Heidegger's distinction between Being (*Sein*, *Être*) and beings (*Seindes*, *étants*) by replacing such a distinction with the *there is* (*il y a*) and existents (*existants*). In disassociating himself from Heidegger's vocabulary, already in *Existence and Existents* Levinas is beginning to move away from ontology to ethical metaphysics.[38]

There is a further aspect to the *there is* in relation to the sacred. Levinas suggests that the experience of the sacred tempts one to cover up one's guilt before the Other.[39] The elemental power of the *there is* can nourish a pretension to a "divine" perspective, at least to the extent in which ambiguity drives our basic fears towards idolisation and ethical escapism.[40] The act of participating in sacred transcendence – such as experiencing awe, enthusiasm, mystery, rapture and mystical ecstasy – is an illusional state that results in the depersonalisation of the self. For Levinas, these sacred feelings result from the horror of being possessed by the experience of them. For example, he writes:

> Horror is somehow a movement which will strip consciousness of its very "subjectivity." Not in lulling it into unconsciousness, but in throwing it into an *impersonal vigilance*, a *participation*, in the sense that Levy-Bruhl gives to the term. What is new in the idea of participation which Levy-Bruhl introduced to describe an existence where horror is the dominant emotion, is the destruction of categories which had hitherto been used to describe the feelings evoked by "the sacred."[41]

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other achieved through his or her role as one who is addressed? Is the person to whom we speak understood beforehand in his being? Not at all. The other is not first an object of understanding and than an interlocutor. The two relations are merged. In other words, addressing the other is inseparable from understanding the other". See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 6.

[38] Later and throughout in his writings, we will find more enigmatic developments of ethics and the notion of the *there is*. Particularly this is exemplified in the essay, "God and Philosophy" (1975), where Levinas speaks of the ambiguity between the notions of the *there is* and *illeity* (the way the Infinite or God is heard in the face of the Other). Again, we are met with another nearly incomprehensible notion, which I will attempt to unravel shortly. See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165-166.

[39] In this analysis I am indebted to John Caruana's critique of the sacred in Levinas' thought. See John Caruana, "Lévinas' Critique of the Sacred," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 42:4 (December, 2002), 519-534.

[40] Caruana states: "Lévinas suspects that the sacred entails a *confusion* of the absolute or divine with the elementary powers of the *il y a*". Later, he reflects: "Rather than having to face up to the consequences of the profound ambiguity of existence – indeterminate being provides us with no signposts that might help to lead a purposeful life – our fears, Lévinas contends, can drive us to establish idols that we imagine can arrest the incessant ambiguity of being". See Caruana, "Lévinas' Critique of the Sacred," 525, 530.

[41] See Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 60. Caruana points out that Levinas discovers a deeper insight of the *there is* in Levy-Bruhl's conception of the phenomenology of the sacred (the participation of mystical experiences). For Levinas, mystical experience exemplifies the state of existence without existents, a state "in which the subject-object dichotomy has either yet to emerge or has been eradicated". See Caruana, "Lévinas' Critique of the Sacred," 524. Perhaps, a better or an alternative way Caruana could have

The destruction of categories signifies that the subject is depersonalised; there is no private existence. Hence, the horror of participating in the *there is* strips subjectivity inside out. Levinas will even describe this state as the "impossibility of death".[42] In this terrifying and enthralling state, God is idolised as a direct experience of the sacred. As John Caruana succinctly describes it, "the self merges with the exhilarating power of the *il y a*".[43] In this context, Levinas' critique of the sacred cannot but seem like a scathing attack upon private mystical experience.[44] Properly understood, however, his critique calls into question any emotional or mystical understanding that would veer toward totalisation and evasion of ethical responsibility.

Time

At the end of *Being and Time*, Heidegger asked, "Is there a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of *Being*? Does *time* itself manifest itself as the horizon of *Being*?[45] Heidegger had hoped that, "Within the horizon of time the projection of a meaning of Being in general can be accomplished".[46] In contrast, Levinas rejects the search for the meaning of Being in general by "deformalising" the notion of time. He writes: "But I have sought for time as the deformalisation of the most formal form that is, the unity of the *I think*. Deformalisation is that which Bergson, Rosenzweig and Heidegger, each in his own way, have opened the problematic of modern thought, by starting from a concreteness 'older' that the pure form of time ...".[47] Levinas attempts to think of time ethically beginning from the face of the Other, a past distinguished from the presence of Being. With such a conception, he transforms the ontological difference between Being and beings into a non-indifference between the self and the Other. In this

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described the state of existence without existents is by which the subject is the very object of its subjective experiences. As a result the subject is depersonalised and exists in an anonymous fashion like other objects.

[42] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 61.

[43] Caruana, "Lévinas' Critique of the Sacred," 525.

[44] For example, Caruana points to David Tracy's remark: "I am unpersuaded by Levinas's consistent polemic against the religious phenomena he variously names mysticism, the violence of the sacred, and paganism". See Caruana, "Lévinas' Critique of the Sacred," 520 and David Tracy, "Response to Adriaan Peperzak on Transcendence," in Peperzak, *Ethics as First Philosophy*, 197.

[45] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 488.

[46] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 278.

[47] See Levinas' essay, "Diachrony and Representation" in Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other [and additional essays]*, translated by Richard A. Cohen. (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 119-120.

regard, we can find that Levinas rejects both the verbal form of Being and the thinking of time on the basis of "to be" or "toward-death". His emphasis is on the idea of ethical transcendence which is irreducible to immanence of this kind.[48] This entails also the rejection of the Husserlian idea of immanence - that is, arising out of - the lived experience of an object's essence.[49]

Levinas' notion of time is also influenced by Bergson and Rosenzweig.[50] In the wake of Bergson, Levinas considers that time is the articulation of what is meaningful,[51] which he interprets as responsibility for the Other. Instead of establishing a connection between primordial time and the meaning of Being in a Heideggerian fashion,[52] Levinas seeks to unburden himself from ontological phenomenology. Here, he seems to have been influenced by Rosenzweig's three "dimensions of temporality", namely, creation, revelation and redemption.[53] Admittedly, Rosenzweig was unfamiliar with Husserlian phenomenology. Yet if we take Rosenzweig's and Husserl's influence together, we can detect a messianic development of phenomenology in Levinas' approach.

Let us look at Rosenzweig's influence more closely. Towards the end of *The Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig discusses the idea of "Gods time" for the Jewish people (the eternal people).[54] Here, he writes of an inversion of time in which the life of the eternal people precedes being for the world. As a result, redemption creates the possibility for the creature's consciousness to be first revealed in its proper state. This would suggest a diachronic conception of time: through the time of redemption history awakens to a consciousness of the eternal way. For Rosenzweig, this eternal way is characterised by

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[48] Levinas states: "Just as *Dasein*, as long as it is, is always a 'not-yet,' it is also always its end. It is its end, or it is *at* its end: that is the significance of the transitivity of the verb 'to be' (the transitivity of the verb 'to be' is Heidegger's greatest discovery)". See Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death and Time*, translated by Bettina Bergo (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 43.

[49] See Dallas Willard, "Knowledge," in Smith and Smith, *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, 148.

[50] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 176.

[51] Levinas states: "In fact, it is Bergson, in his notion of duration, that there is not only this idea of 'novelty,' but also this idea of intelligibility through time. Time is the very intelligibility of the meaningful." See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 269.

[52] At the end of Being and Time, Heidegger writes: "Is there a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of Being? Does *time* itself manifest itself as the horizon of *Being*?" See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 488.

[53] Emmanuel Levinas, "Foreword," in Stéphane Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 15.

[54] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 420.

passivity and alterity, for "... it is God who experiences while man merely watches".[55] The implication is that human existence participates in the truth of God passively, even if it is always on the way to truth. To walk in the light of God's countenance is to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).[56] In Rosenzweig's analysis of God's time, diachrony, passivity and alterity are inextricably interwoven.

Under the influence of Rosenzweig, Levinas develops an idea of time along messianic lines. Here he is obviously distancing himself from Husserlian and Heideggerian influences. His idea of time moves more in the direction of passivity, alterity and diachrony in response to divine revelation. His analysis of time is further elaborated by a number of elusive post-phenomenological notions, namely *to-God*, diachrony and the trace of an immemorial past. Before offering a word on each of these, let me first take note of the post-phenomenological context of Levinas' development.

- I am using the term, post-phenomenology to describe Levinas' desire to go beyond both Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. A particular example of this is his treatment of the non-phenomenality of the face. For Levinas, the face cannot be neither seen, thought nor re-presented. Accordingly, its "non-phenomenality" is beyond the range of both Being and experience. In contrast, Levinas describes phenomenality as, "... the exhibition of being's essence in truth". This amounts to a game of obscuring and veiling Being's essence in consciousness.[57]
- The idea of *to-God* refers to the infinity of time. It implies a moral order irreducible to objectivity, thematisation and the presence of Being.[58] It is "diachronic" reality.[59]
- The idea of diachrony speaks of transcendence in the sense of disinterestedness, a state in which the Same[60] turns toward the Other. In this context, Levinas will often write

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[55] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 394.
[56] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 424.
[57] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 132.
[58] See Levinas, *Is it Righteous To Be?*, 176; Levinas, *God, Death and Time*, 96; and Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 177. Levinas reflects: "The infinity of time doesn't frighten me; I think that it is the very movement of the *à-Dieu*, and that time is better that eternity which is an exasperation of the "present," an idealization of the present". See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 176.
[59] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 176.
[60] The Same (*le Même*): The finite self's imperialistic and egoistic identity. The Heideggerian *Dasein* without any concern for alterity. Levinas states: "The Dasein Heidegger puts in place of the soul,

"disinterestedness" in French as "*dés-inter-esse-ment*," as a complex verbal word-play, to indicate the break with Being (which in Latin is "*esse*"). Levinas writes: "A disinterestedness that, in my phenomenology, is explained as a responsibility for the other, as a holiness in which the self is constituted as the uniqueness of an irreducible I, in the impossibility – ethical or holy – of seeking a replacement for oneself".[61] In this condition of diachrony, a responsibility comes to the self as an imperative and an accusation beyond consciousness and presence.[62]

• Diachrony also speaks of "a trace of an immemorial past". It is vestige of a past more ancient than sin in that it has never been present. The significance of this "trace" lies in its significance to awaken the self to a unique responsibility.[63] In itself, this Levinasian idea is enigmatic in its signification. It evokes both the non-phenomenality of the face and the way in which God or the Infinite come to mind. Levinas writes: "The trace of a past in a face is not the absence of a yet non-revealed, but the anarchy of what has never been present, of an infinite which commands in the face of the other, and which, like an excluded middle, could not be aimed at".[64] In a sense, the trace signifies transcendence to the point of absence, a confusing ambiguity that accuses, traumatises and commands.

The next section will speak further of the trace in the sense of the trace of *illeity*. Taken together, the Levinasian conception of time points to an ethical relation outside of knowledge, experience (*Erlebnis*) and the synchrony of presence.[65] We begin, therefore,

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consciousness, or the ego, retains the structure of the same ... Heideggerian philosophy precisely marks the apogee of a thought in which the finite does not refer to the infinite". See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 51-52.

[61] See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 233.

[62] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 9-10 and Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 176. Levinas reflects, "Is not diachrony, beyond the synchrony of every eternal present, the nodal point of the irreversible (or disinterested) relation of me to the neighbour, to the other? Is not diachrony the impossibility of synchrony and yet a nonindifference, a movement towards God, an *à-Dieu*, and so already love?" See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 222.

[63] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 89 and Webb, "The Rhetoric of Ethics as Excess," 9. Levinas writes: "The supreme anachronism of a *past* that was never a *now*, and the approach of the infinite through sacrifice – is the Enigma's word. A face can appear as a face, as a proximity interrupting the series, only if it enigmatically comes from the Infinite and its immemorial past". See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 77.

[64] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 97.

[65] Synchrony (*Synchronie*): Similar patterns of egoistic behaviour across time. Levinas likens it to an eternal presence. See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 222. Levinas states: "In thought understood as vision, knowledge, and intentionality, intelligibility thus signifies the reduction of the other [*Autre*] to the

to see that time is an encounter with the Other,[66] in which the trace of an immemorial past accuses the self of having delayed. Moreover this understanding of time points to the collapse of phenomenality at a point where the face of the Other arouses the obligation and responsibility.[67]

The Other

"The Other" (*l'Autrui*) refers to the personal other. It is often characterised in biblical language as the poor one, neighbour, stranger, widow and orphan.[68] In contrast, "the other" (*l'autre*) refers to all personal others or every neighbour in a more general sense.[69] Levinas connects the idea of the Other[70] with that of the face. The face of the Other is signified as a non-phenomenal trace. Further, it can be an effaced trace commanding an approach to the Other. We see this when Levinas writes: "A face as a trace, trace of itself, trace expelled in a trace, does not signify an indeterminate phenomenon; its ambiguity is not an indetermination of a noema, but an invitation to the fine risk of approach qua approach, to the exposure of one to the other, to the exposure of this exposedness, the expression of exposure, saying".[71] For Levinas, the face can ambiguously be a trace and be effaced at the same time. This is because the face signifies itself as an absence to indicate that the self has not been present enough in its responsibilities. In other words, the face of the Other is a non-phenomenal phenomenon. It is the locus in which God or the Infinite might be heard. On this matter Levinas writes: "The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the

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Same, synchrony as *being* in its egological gathering". See Levinas, "Diachrony and Representation," in Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 99.

[66] Levinas writes: "We think that the idea-of the-Infinite-in-me – or my relation to God – comes to me in the concreteness of my relation to the other person, in the sociality which is my responsibility for the neighbour. This is a responsibility where, not in any 'experience' I have contracted, the face of the Other, through its alterity, through its very strangeness, speaks the commandment which came from one knows not where." See Levinas' essay, "The Old and the New," in Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 136.

[67] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 88-89.

[68] Levinas states: "But in the responsibility for the Other [*Autrui*], for another freedom, the negativity of this anarchy, this refusal of the present, of appearing, of the immemorial, commands me and ordains me to the other [*autrui*], to the first one on the scene, and makes me approach him, makes me his neighbour". See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 11.

[69] Levinas writes: "The neighbour qua other [*autre*] does not have himself be preceded by any precursor who would depict or announce his silhouette. He does not appear". See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 86.

[70] Throughout the thesis, I shall refer to the Levinasian sense of *L'Autrui* as "the Other" in contrast to *L'autre* as "the other".

[71] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 94.

manifestation of the height in which God is revealed".[72] The idea of the face of the Other signifies an extreme state of passivity which overwhelms theoretical consciousness, and evokes the biblical themes of the love of neighbour and being made in the image of God.[73]

In the epiphany of the face of the Other, Levinas discerns three aspects, namely, destitution, facing and demand. He brings then together in the following condensed statement:

> The first thing which is evident in the face of the other is this rectitude of exposure and defenselessness. In his face, the human being is most naked, destitution itself. And at the same time, he faces. It is a manner in which he is completely alone in his facing us that we measure the violence perpetrated in death. Third moment of the epiphany of the face: it makes a demand on me. The face looks at me and calls me. It lays claim to me.[74]

The first aspect of the moment of the face is the poverty of the Other. The face reveals the nakedness and neediness of the human being. But paradoxically, the face is also non-phenomenal. This is strange because it is the naked phenomenon. To understand this ambiguity, Levinas points out in the second moment that in the face is the command to be responsible, which can never be represented in consciousness. This suggests that the self encounters a messianic and immemorial dimension of time in which the Other's destitution is exposed. In a third aspect of the epiphany of the face, the self is confronted with a demand to be responsible to and for this Other, in a particularity that transcends the abstractions of Being and the more routine experience of the Other. These three aspects of the face of the Other define a sense of love for our neighbour, with the fear for the Other's death and solitude.

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[72] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 79. Later he reflects: "I'm not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God". See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 110. Edith Wyschogrod describes the face as the "Disincarnate presence of the Other. It prevents totalization and the triumph of totality. It is the source of revelation of the other who cannot be encompassed in cognition. It calls separated being, egoity, the self into question". See Wyschogrod, "Key To Special Terminology" in *Emmanuel Levinas, The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics*. Wyschogrod's definition of the face seems to be limited to Levinas' work of *Totality and Infinity*, as there is no mention of further refinements to the notion apparent in *Otherwise than Being*.

[73] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, translated by Bettina Bergo (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998),148-149, 172-173.

[74] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 127.

These three aspects illustrate Levinas' attempt to emphasise Levinas' attempt to conceive of an inexpressible particularity beyond Hegel's dialectical and speculative reason, Husserl's view of intentionality and Heidegger's existential and ontological construction of *Dasein*'s facticity.[75] Levinas goes beyond Husserl and Heidegger by appropriating Rosenzweig's criticism of Hegelian totality. His philosophical strategy is, however, markedly different. Instead of following Rosenzweig's graphic and symbolic description of a face that goes beyond Hegelian logic, he utilises it to develop a non-phenomenality of the face. Hence, the encounter with the face of the Other signifies ethical responsibility that cuts through any attempt to re-present the Other through synchrony and abstract thought. The face of the neighbour enigmatically escapes representation by having a non-form: a trace of a past that has never been present.[76] Such a non-form speaks of the Other's alterity as having a claim on the self even before the encounter occurs. Let us briefly, then, look at the idea of alterity in more detail.

Alterity, or otherness, refers to the disturbing proximity of the neighbour.[77] The proximity in question has a disturbing effect because it imposes on the self an unheard-of responsibility, to such an extent, that the self's consciousness is overwhelmed by the demands placed on it. Levinas will describe this overwhelming effect in such dramatic terms as trauma, persecution and that of being held hostage.[78] The character of the Other, its alterity, is declared in "the Saying". The Saying is an extreme passivity of substituting oneself for another. Such kenotic-like responsibility witnesses to the glory of the Infinite. For what is expressed in such Saying is the ambiguous unheard-of obligation that gives rise to the possibility of ethics.[79] As Levinas describes it: "The Saying as testimony

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[75] See Cohen, *Elevations*, 245-246.
[76] Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 97.
[77] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 80-81. Levinas states: "Proximity is a disturbance of the rememberable time. One can call that apocalyptically the break-up of time. But it is a matter of an effaced but untameable diachrony of non-historical, non-said time, which cannot by synchronized in a present by memory and historiography, where the present is but the trace of an immemorial past. The obligation aroused by the proximity of the neighbour is not to the measure of the images he gives me; it concerns me before or otherwise. Such is the sense of the non-phenomenality of the face." See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 89.
[78] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 112, 117-118, 148-149.
[79] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 74, 103-105; and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 48.

precedes all saying. The Saying, before stating a Said – and even the Saying of a Said – is the approach of the other and already testimony".[80] As this Saying so approaches and declares the Other, Levinas is suggesting that the self is involved with the Other. The self is now constituted in a form of extreme passivity, in a receptivity that activity inherent in the *noema* necessarily obscures. Because of this passivity, the Other so occupies the self that it is turned inside out, and prevented from being self-enclosed, in an untroubled being-for-oneself. Accordingly, the Saying expresses for the self that radical disinterestedness that is being demanded in its becoming an other-directed subjectivity - being for-the-other.[81]

In another range of reference, alterity is described as the trace of *illeity*. The word *illeity* is a neologism derived from the French third person singular (*il*) and Latin (*ille*), meaning "that one". Levinas describes it as, "... the *he* [or "that one"] in the depth of the you".[82] This is one of Levinas' more complex and, indeed, complicated, notions because of its large and shifting range of connotations. The referential scope of *illeity* extends on occasion to God, the Infinite or "the third" (*le Tiers*) or even to what might be confused with the stirrings of the *there is*.[83] Eschewing precise definitions, Levinas is not always consistent, occupied as he is, for the most part, with the dyad of the self and the Other. His elaboration of the interrelationship within the triad of the self, the Other and *illeity* receives less attention, which does not make for any simple clarification in this area.

As Levinas' thought progresses, his exposition becomes more idiosyncratic and exponentially more difficult to unravel. His idea of *illeity* might be best interpreted by

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[80] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 103.
[81] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49-51.
[82] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165.
[83] In regard to the notion of "the Third", Levinas also refers to it as justice, the other Other, the absent Other and the neighbour. Levinas writes: "The subject is inspired by the Infinite, which, as *illeity*, does not appear, is not present, has always already past, is neither theme, telos nor interlocutor." See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 148. Further, Alphonso Lingis in his Foreword to *Otherwise than Being* states: "Illeity, this movement of infinition, Levinas names God". See Alphonso Lingis, "Foreword," in Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, xxxix. In view of Levinas statement, the notion of *illeity* is an extremely ambiguous one. Does it refer to God, the Infinite or in fact to the anonymous stirrings of the *there is*? After all, Levinas names *illeity* as that very order from the Infinite in the face of the Other that slips into my like a thief in the night. See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*. 150 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.

comparing it with the unnameable Tetragrammaton (YHWH, יהוה). Just as the Hebrew words, *Adonai* (the Lord) or *Ha Shem* (the Name), are used in the reading of the Tetragrammaton, so "the Saying" in which the Infinite passes transcribes the very signification of otherness.[84] Just as the Tetragrammaton is unpronounceable, so the *illeity* in the face of the Other is non-phenomenal; both remain an enigma that can never be re-presented by thought and thematised as an object.[85]

God

The idea of God appears throughout Levinas' ethical metaphysics and Talmudic writings. Particularly it is articulated especially in his opposition to Heideggerian philosophy, onto-theology and also to theodicy.[86] In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas begins by pointing to the need of rationally speaking of God without the contamination of Heideggerian ontology and onto-theology: "But to hear a God not contaminated by Being is a human possibility no less important and no less precarious than to bring Being out of the oblivion in which it is said to have fallen in metaphysics and onto-theology."[87] For Levinas, God is not reducible to the presence of personal experience and historical thematisations.[88] In contrast, one must *hear* "a God" in the Other's face via ethical subjectivity. The meaning of God is found in the search for God. The searching possesses three movements: desire for the Other, the perseverance of waiting for God, and substituting for the Other.[89] It is motivated by the ideal of holiness.[90] The subject

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[84] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 147.
[85] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 12.
[86] In regards to "onto-theo-logy", Levinas reflects: "But a question arises: did onto-theo-logy's mistake consist in taking being for God, or rather in taking God for being? ... To contrast [*opposer*] God with onto-theo-logy is to conceive a new mode, a new mode of meaning. And it is from a certain ethical relationship that one may start out on this search." See Levinas, *God, Death and Time*, 124-125.
"Theodicy" employs philosophical (onto-theological) reasoning to justify and explain belief in God in a world of suffering and evil. See Ford, *The Modern Theologians*, 214, 757. On "The End of Theodicy," Levinas states: "The disproportion between suffering and every theodicy was shown at Auschwitz with a glaring, obvious clarity. Its possibility puts into question the multimillennial traditional faith. Did not Nietzsche's saying about the death of God take on, in the extermination camps, the meaning of a quai-empirical fact?" See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 97.
[87] Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, xlviii.
[88] Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 52.
[89] Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 95.
[90] Levinas reflects: "I am not at all certain that the 'otherwise than being' is guaranteed to triumph. There can be periods during which the human is completely extinguished, but the ideal of holiness is what humanity has introduced into being. An ideal of holiness contrary to the laws of being". See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 114.

approaches the realm of the holy by thinking "otherwise than Being", which entails giving the Other priority over the self.[91]

Levinas' Talmudic writings place an emphasis on responding to God's obscurity and suffering through prayer, kenosis, justice, mercy and faithfulness. For example, he writes, "The power of God subordinated to responsibility becomes a moral force. ... Man's deed count before God because they engage others. The fear of God is the fear for others".[92] His philosophical writings show a different emphasis in that God is articulated as breaking into thematic, objectifying consciousness through the notion of the Infinite.[93] It implies an unequalled passivity and trauma when confronted with the impossibility of conceiving of God as an object, a presence or as Being itself. Ultimately, God is unnameable and beyond conscious thematisation.[94]

For Levinas, it is the non-intentionality of consciousness that gives rise to the transcendence in which the Word of God resonates. Consciousness is moral conscience marked by passivity and receptivity to the hunger and fear which is being suffered by the Other.[95] Such consciousness, in answering in responsibility in the face of the Other, demands devotion, passion and expiation. The word "God" can be pronounced only in a condition of radical alterity. Especially in his later works, Levinas treats of God as beyond presence and objectivity inherent in any attempt to explain or prove the divinity. As a result, a further complexity and ambiguity mark Levinasian discourse at this point. For example, Levinas locates God between transcendence and visibility or invisibility. God is transcendent to the point of absence - beyond Being, presence and immanence; and beyond any distinction between Being and beings.[96] In this paradoxical situation, the

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[91] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 109.
[92] Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, translated by Gary D. Mole (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 162.
[93] Levinas states: "The idea of God is God in me, but God already breaking up the consciousness which aims at ideas, and unlike any content. ... This putting is an unequalled passivity, because it is unassumable. ... Or conversely, it is as thought the negation of the finite included in In-finity did not signify any sort of negation resulting from the formal structure of negative judgment but rather signified the *idea of the Infinite*, that is the Infinite in me". Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 136.
[94] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.
[95] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 172-173.
[96] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 62-63 and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

word "God" can nonetheless be pronounced. Levinas' philosophical writings refer to God in a vocabulary inspired by the biblical themes of justice, mercy and love for the neighbour. For example, Levinas will describe mercy as a word of God inspiring the endurance of the Other's sufferings and persecution. In another context, he will speak of mercy as maternity, that is, the gestation of the Other in the Same.[97] But basic to his theological language is the constant effort to relate the self, the Other and God in what he terms an encounter. We turn now to the meaning of this term in his philosophical rhetoric.

Encounter

Given that the idea of encounter presents some difficulty, it is best, from the outset, to distinguish it from "experience". Levinas is suspicious of the word, "experience (*experience*) because of its totalising connotations, and tends not to use it when treating the relation of alterity. Even though he does use the word *vécu* for lived experience (*Erlebnis*) throughout his interviews and writings,[98] his use of the term *expérience* reflects *Erlebnis* to some extent, but mainly under its "terrifying" aspect. He notes that *expérience* "expresses always a knowledge of which the I is master"[99], and concedes, "I am very cautious with this word. Experience is knowledge".[100] In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas speaks about "insomnia" as manifesting a quality of the *there is*. It pertains to the "experience of being an object" and as an "experience of depersonalisation".[101] In this sense, insomnia is almost prior to experience, for it is being gripped by the nothing or of being exposed by the very eternity of Being.

Another less extreme, but nevertheless helpful instance is his analysis of Infinity in relation to experience. He writes: "My responsibility for the other is precisely this

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[97] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 75.
[98] For example, Levinas responds: "It is incontestable that in every philosophical reflection, in every philosophical essay, there are memories of a lived experience [*vécu*] which is not rigorously intellectual". See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 96. See also Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 31-34 where he emphasises, for example, that the sensible qualities such as sounds, colours, hardness and softness are not revealed in temporal lived experience. As a result, intentionality is time itself. Further, he connects lived experience with the temporality of time and the verb to be.
[99] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 97.
[100] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 136.
[101] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 66.

relation with an unthematizable Infinity. It is neither the experience of Infinity nor proof of it: it *testifies* to Infinity. This *testimony* is not appended to a 'subjective experience' in order to proclaim the ontological 'conjuncture' disclosed to the subject. This testimony belongs to the very glory of the Infinite".[102] This suggests that there can be no experience or knowledge of Infinity, but only the testimony of answering to the Infinite's prophetic call within.[103] As opposed to experience, the sense of Infinity speaks of the desire for the Good, the overflowing of the Other in one's consciousness. It is manifest in the desire to hear the Word of God in the Other's face. Hence, in contrast to the self's responsibility for the other that testifies to infinity, we can conclude that experience is the mode of Being that reduces the Other to the Same.[104]

The notion of encounter is further illuminated when placed in a larger nest of terms which includes "approach", "enigma", "signification", "proximity" and "non-indifference". Levinas tends to use these terms in apposition. While this enriches the meaning of encounter, it does not make for an easy thematisation of their respective meanings.[105] Nonetheless, let us briefly look at each of these terms in order to refine our analysis of encounter more comprehensively.

- The term "approach" signifies being obsessed with responsibility for the Other. It connotes a situation in which one is inspired by the Infinite to sacrifice for the Other in a way that does not reduce the Other to lived experience.[106]
- The term "enigma" is perhaps more specific in that it denotes moral responsibility beyond all cognition. It identifies the effaced trace of God as the non-phenomenal way in which the Other makes the self responsible.[107]

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[102] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 103.
[103] Levinas writes: "Witness is humility and admission; it is made before all theology; it is kerygma and prayer, glorification and recognition". See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 149.
[104] My analysis of experience in comparison to encounter appears in my article, "The Triune Drama of the Resurrection *via* Levinas' Non-Phenomenology," *Sophia* 42:2 (October, 2003), 82.
[105] See for example Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 139.
[106] Levinas states: "I approach the infinite insofar as I forget myself from my neighbour who looks at me; I forget myself only in breaking the undephasable simultaneity of representation, in existing beyond my death. I approach the infinite by sacrificing myself. Sacrifice is the norm and the criterion of the approach". See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 76. Also Levinas states: "In an approach I am first servant of a neighbour, already late and guilty for being late." See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 87.

• The term "signification" evidences the quality of non-phenomenality, bespeaking the relation to the Other. But the meaning of this term is further complicated because of its association with ideas such as anarchy (non-beginning) and infinity. In short, the meaning of "signification" can be condensed as a sense of our being ordained from a time without beginning to an endless responsibility.[108]

• "Proximity" is yet another term pertinent to the meaning of encounter. At the risk of straining further an already overstretched rhetoric, we could suggest that "proximity" is the signifyingness of signification, inherent in the very *for* of the relationship with the Other.[109] More simply, proximity signifies that there is never enough responsibility. For example, in the relationship with the Other, proximity signifies that there is not just one Other involved in the relation, but a multitude of Others. It connotes the presence of "the third party" in the relation with the Other, in a world of intersubjectivity.[110]

• Related to this indeterminate intersubjective range of "Others" is the term "non-indifference" to a neighbour. The idea is that the self's responsibility is unique and undeclineable.[111]

There is a further group of terms pertinent to the meaning of encounter which require some comment. These include "the death of the Other", "the inversion of the self", "relation with God", and "mercy".

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[107] Levinas writes: "The enigma, the intervention of meaning which disturbs phenomena but is quite ready to withdraw like an undesirable stranger, unless one harkens to those footsteps that depart, is transcendence itself, the proximity of the Other as Other." See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 74.

[108] Levinas reflects: "Signification is the contradictory trope of the-one-for-the-other. The-one-for-the-other is not a lack of intuition, but the surplus of responsibility. My responsibility for the other is the *for* of the relationship, the very signifying of signification, which signifies in saying before showing itself in the said." See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 100. The said [*le dit*] refers to the experience of synchrony, ontological language or the manifestation of Being. Levinas also speaks of the 'unsaid" [*dédit*] in the sense of denying all that should be said about Saying. See Adriaan Peperzak, *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 62.

[109] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 83, 100.

[110] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 83. Levinas states: "Proximity is quite distinct from every other relationship, and has to be conceived as a responsibility for the other; it might be called humanity, or subjectivity, or self". See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 46.

[111] Levinas reflects: "The non-indifference to the other as other and as neighbour in which I exist is something beyond any commitment in the voluntary sense of the term, for it extends into my very bearing as an entity, to the point of substitution." See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 138.

• First, encounter signifies being exposed to death on the Other's face. This produces the imperative of responsibility over an indifferent state of personal freedom. It calls for the priority of being-*for*-the-Other in the form of non-indifference and love.[112]

• Through "inversion of the self", encounter requires that the egoistic self be turned inside out to become an authentically ethical self. In what amounts to a moral conversion,[113] the encounter with the Other's face entails a "radical turnabout".[114]

• With regard to the relation with God, Levinas writes, "The direct encounter with God, *this* is a Christian concept. As Jews, we are always a threesome: I and you and the Third who is in our midst. And only as a Third does He reveal Himself".[115] Whilst Christian theology can question Levinas' statement in this context, it is clear that he considers divine revelation to occur only in a consciousness that is turned inside out in responsibility for all others in live and justice.[116]

• Finally, *encounter* is associated with "mercy". One must take responsibility for the Other's suffering. Levinas describes this mercy as "a word of God", "an eschatology without hope for oneself", or "a theology without theodicy".[117]

By taking these four aspects together, we can understand encounter as the self's state of passivity and alterity before the Other. Here there is a possible Heideggerian influence, despite Levinas' determined break with the German philosopher.[118] A comparatively unexplored area in this context is Heidegger's notions of encounter (*Begegnen*) and his

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[112] In his lecture, "Bloch: Toward a Conclusion," Levinas states: "We encounter death on the face of the other". Several years later he reflects, "I sometimes ask myself whether the idea of the straight line – the shortest distance between two points is not originally the line according to which the face that I encounter is exposed to death". See Levinas, *God, Death and Time*, 105 and Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 65, 127.

[113] Lonergan writes: "... moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction ehen value and satisfaction conflict". See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 240.

[114] Levinas states: "This human inversion of the in-itself and the for-itself (of 'every man for himself') into an ethical self, into a priority of the for-the-other – this replacement of the for-itself of ontological persistence by an *I* henceforth unique certainty, but unique because of its chosenness for a responsibility for the other man – inescapable and non-transferable, this radical turnabout would take place in what I can an encounter with the face of the other." See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 202.

[115] Seán Hand (ed.), *The Levinas* Reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 247.

[116] See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 133, 193-194.

[117] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 146.

[118] My analysis here of Levinas' and Heidegger's idea of encounter will appear in my forthcoming article, "Understanding Levinas' Origins: Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig," *The Heythrop Journal*, 2005.

treatment of experience as *Erlebnis* and *Erfahren.*[119] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger developed the notion of encounter (*Begegnen*) by seeking to overcome the problems inherent in the notions of *Erfahren*/experience[120] and *Erlebnis*/Experience. We have, then, some indication of how Heidegger sought to find a way into the question of the meaning of Being in general, firstly through *Dasein*, and then through "the nothing". *Erlebnisse*, the perception of lived experiences, fail to provide *Dasein* with the opportunity to encounter Being in its potentiality and as care (*Sorge*). *Erfahren*, the active experience of environmental entities, result in the same failure, since they are insignificant in themselves. However, *Erfahren* is paradoxically necessary for it points to "the nothing", namely, the worldhood of the world. When *Dasein* allows itself to be encountered by "the nothing" in the form of anxiety, the possibility exists for it to overcome its ontic character as the "they-self". Ontologically, *Dasein* is in a position of Being-free by means of encounter for its authentic possibilities.

It can be suggested, then, that there are some similarities between these two approaches to encounter. For both seeks to address the problem of lived experience and the oppressive experiences of the world.[121] But differences remain. Whereas both Levinas and Heidegger reject lived experiences as foundational, that latter highlights the oppressiveness of "the nothing". For Levinas, however, the oppressiveness of the world is not to be overcome through care for one's existential possibilities, but by the path of responsibility for the Other. To what extent, then, has the Heideggerian notion of encounter influenced Levinas' development of a similar category? This question would require further research beyond the scope of the thesis. Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that Levinas has developed the idea of encounter in respect to alterity, an otherness that

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[119] John Macquarrie translates *Erfahrung and erfahren* as "experience" and *Erlebnis* as "Experience". See footnote in Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 72.

[120] Inwood points out that *er-fahren* has an active sense ("In active experience, we 'go forth' (*er-fahren*) to look for something, whereas *Erfahrung* (defined by Heidegger as "any experience" (*Being and Time*, 72, ftn.1) "is at first passive: we come across something without going in search of it". See Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 62-64.

[121] Heidegger states, "What oppresses is not this or that, nor is it the summation of everything present-at-hand; it is rather the *possibility* of the-ready-to-hand in general; that is to say, it is the world itself". See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 231.

exceeds the *conatus* of Being in a Heideggerian sense. The Levinasian sense of otherness can be further expressed under the following heading.

Exposure

The idea of "exposure" depicts a state of consciousness deeply affected by the wounds, outrage and insult suffered by the Other. In this sense, it implies a hyperbolic passivity or vulnerability to the Other. As Levinas explains it, "Here exposure has a sense radically different from thematisation. The one is exposed to the other as a skin is exposed to what wounds it as a cheek is offered to the smiter".[122] Such exposure is the cause and result of an acute responsibility. Levinas graphically describes it as a haemorrhaging for the Other.[123] Ethical consciousness bleeds for the suffering Other. This kind of exposure also has erotic overtones. Though Levinas disassociates love from eros,[124] he nonetheless employs a number of erotic ideas and images in his elaboration of the meaning of "exposure". "Maternity" is one such example. Here we read, "Maternity, which is bearing par excellence, bears even responsibility for the persecuting by the persecutor".[125] Levinas' ethically modulated idea of exposure to the Other is not above using a wide range of physical, erotic and affected-laden images.

Levinas makes a linguistic and theological connection of his notion of "maternity" to the Hebrew terms mercy (*Rakhamim*) and uterus (*Rekhem*) respectively. He recognises that *Rekhem* is the origin of the word *Rakhamim*. It is therefore not surprising, then, that he goes on to suggest, "*Rakhamim* is the relation of the uterus to the *other*, whose gestation takes place within it. *Rakhamim* is maternity itself. God as merciful is God defined by maternity."[126] Here we can detect a Talmudic influence on Levinas' philosophical discourse. He brings together the ideas and images of mercy and maternity, but paradoxically in a context that stresses love as distinct from eros. He clarifies this by observing that, "For the encounter with the face I still reserve another word: *miséricorde*,

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[122] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49.
[123] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 74.
[124] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 113.
[125] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 75.
[126] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, translated and with an introduction by Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 183.

mercy, when one assumes responsibility for the suffering of the other. This appears naturally as the phenomenon of love."[127] The encounter with the Other remains throughout a painful and difficult condition. When love is related to such all-exacting alterity, there is little room for imaging love as an experience of erotic joy.

Both the terms, exposure and maternity, signify the extreme alterity of a life of genuine Other-wardness. When eros is made to surrender so completely to ethical intersubjectivity, an outer limit of self-renunciation is presumed: the personal experiences of joy, desire and personal taste or disposition cannot be primary in the face of the gravity of the suffering, hunger and loneliness of the Other.[128] Such an exposure to the Other's destitution and the necessity of bearing of the Other's faults results in a divine comedy, a grave drama whereby, "... the laughter sticks to one's throat when the neighbour approaches – that is, when his face, or his forsakenness, draws near".[129] In this ironic role-reversing plot of ethical existence, God's transcendence is shown forth in the self's responsibility for the Other. The ethical self can not longer refer to God through objectivity, presence and Being, but through the self's passivity towards the Other.[130] We will now try to take our understanding of the passivity involved a step further.

Passivity

In his exposition of passivity and the extreme demands of alterity, Levinas employs a further range of terms to bring out the meaning of this exposure, as the ethical subject, in a kind of deep-seated conversation, is held hostage by the approach of the Other.[131] We will attempt a brief remark, the, on such notions as "the hither side", "recurrence", "the individuation of the ego", "openness" and "the Good beyond Being".[132]

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[127] See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 145-146.
[128] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 136.
[129] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.
[130] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165.
[131] Levinas states: "Vulnerability, exposure to outrage, to wounding, passivity more passive than all patience, passivity of the accusative form, trauma of accusation suffered by a hostage to the point of persecution, implicating the identity of the hostage who substitutes himself for the others: all this is the self, a defecting of defeat of the ego's identity." See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 15.
[132] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 92, 111, 118, 119 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 136.

- The hither side suggests the contraction of the uncaring ego as it is affected by the new demands it encounters.[133]
- The recurrence of the self signifies the change that occurs as one moves from a violent sense of the Other to an expiatory stance.[134]
- Through individuation the self in this expiatory relationship signifies a certain fusion of identity between the self and the suffering reality of the Other. Here Levinas will cryptically state, "I am an Other".[135]
- This new identity is described as openness. In its open, receptivity or passivity, to the Other, the imperialistic, self-enclosed identity of the ego is broken open.[136]
- Openness and compassionate receptivity is in the thrall of the Good beyond Being. It brings out a dislocated passivity in the ego formerly habituated to its command of objects in time and space. The Good is beyond Being, coming out of an immemorial past which can be invoked as God.[137] Any uncritical technique associated with an ontological style of analogical thought is called into question. The "analogy of Being" can represent neither God nor humanity. God's Being cannot be reduced to experience as the place and time of the logos, the discourse of reason. If the word "God" is to be pronounced, then it is to be risked in substitution for the Other to the point of expiation.[138]

While these descriptions of passivity emphasise further non-intentionality and alterity, this is not the end of the matter for Levinas. His concept of passivity needs an even further elaboration in reference to six terms: "fear", "fission", "trauma", "diachrony", "anarchy" and "persecution".[139] Each of these and all of them together refer to the overwhelming passivity in which the self bears witness to God. They intensify the meaning of the *illeity* of God's passing referred to above.[140] Let us look more closely at these terms.

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[133] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 195.
[134] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 111.
[135] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 118.
[136] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 119.
[137] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 136.
[138] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 156, 162.
[139] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 78, 175 and Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 111-112, 147-149, 154.
[140] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

• Levinas speaks of a fear before the face of the Other.[141] In this regard, fear is not a lived experience, for it exceeds consciousness by way of the non-phenomenality of the Other's face. Levinas considers that fear is accompanied with responsibility for the Other. He goes as far as saying that it is a responsibility for the Other's death. Hence, fearing for the Other signifies that the self's personal experience and intentions are not the primary concern. This is to say that fear is not simply the objectification of *my* feeling frightened or sad.

Through fear in the Levinasian sense, the face of the Other provokes a radical turnabout. The subject is turned, we might say, "inside out", moving from the self-enclosure of being in-oneself and for-oneself, to enter into a relational state of being for-the-other.[142] This site of ethical transcendence discloses a surplus of meaning. It overwhelms and overflows consciousness. Here, Levinas refers to Descartes' third meditation as it speaks of glory overflowing the present in the thought of God.[143] In this fear for another in the face of the Other, a fear which touches on reverence and awe, the word "God" means something in this relational context. Levinas can say that this is the fear in which we have the birth of the logos, the very discourse that effaces presence and signifies consciousness as passivity and moral conscience.[144]

• Even though Levinasian "fission" and "trauma" tend to receive less attention than "fear", they are richly suggestive. In one instance, Levinas combines both, speaking of "the trauma of a fission of oneself come to pass in a venture risked with God or through God".[145] Elsewhere, he identifies fission as an inward secrecy. In this it is related to the description of *illeity*, the ways in which God commands the self to testify to the divine glory. It also enables the possibility for the *noesis* to be articulated without attachment to the *noema*, and so gives rise to ethical subjectivity that looks to the Other beyond the scope of experience.[146] This fission of the self leads to "trauma". The self is taken by

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[141] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 175.
[142] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 202.
[143] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 146.
[144] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 175-176.
[145] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 78.
[146] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 146-148.

surprise by the face of the Other. It begins to feel the force of an "unheard-of obligation", "ambivalence" and the "possibility of inspiration".[147]

• Levinas describes the trauma of encountering the trace of *illeity* as ambivalence; indeed, as "a diachronic ambivalence".[148] The diachrony at work here is related to the awakening to responsibility in a time beyond experience.[149] The "ambivalence" resides in being ordered to a responsibility for the Other in a way that can never be represented. The ambivalence is intensified in Levinasian usage since he describes the time of diachrony as not only a past that is not present, but also as a past without origin.[150] Furthermore, Levinas occasionally connects diachrony, or the past without origin, with "anarchy", literally, the "unoriginate".[151] We find here two very complex terms. In perhaps more manageable language, Levinas describes diachrony as the self's responsibility for others and as transcendence.[152] In contrast, the idea of anarchy emphasises the pre-originality of diachrony. Our philosopher explains that anarchy implies the bond between the subject and the Good.[153] It, rather than the analogy of Being, identifies the Good beyond Being and constitutes ethical transcendence. This would entail that Levinas uses the idea of anarchy to emphasise that transcendence cannot be reduced to the event of Being and intentional consciousness, but is signified through an immemorial past.

• A further complexity arises when Levinas describes anarchy as persecution or obsession.[154] An inversion of consciousness from intentionality to passivity occurs in this anarchy and produces an ethical state of persecution: it is "... being called into question prior to questioning, responsibility over and beyond the logos of response. It is as though persecution by another were at the bottom of solidarity with another".[155] To be called into question beyond the logos of response is to find that the self is stretched to the limits

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[147] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 148.
[148] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 149.
[149] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 155.
[150] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 116.
[151] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 116.
[152] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 119.
[153] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Writings*, 136-137.
[154] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 101.
[155] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 102.

of responsibility. Levinas considers persecution as obsessive, in that, through an infinite passion of responsibility, the passivity of the self turns into expiation.[156] In all this extreme language, Levinas is attempting to find a language adequate to an ethics responsive to the Good beyond Being. In short, persecution is the passivity of the self. Because the self is liberated from any project of mastery on the part of itself or others, it has an openness to what is otherwise than Being, namely the possibility of sacrificing for the Other.[157]

Taken together, these modalities of passivity signify an ethical transformation overwhelming consciousness and turning it inside out. There is a point of particular reference to Christian theology in this depiction of passivity. Levinas speaks of the self as a gift to the Other.[158] The self-gift is marked with an unthematisable sign of God's trace (*illeity*).[159] The very possibility of giving signifies an un-heard of command that overwhelms and traumatises consciousness. The word "God" is heard in the self's passivity to the Other. But hearing the word of God depends on the extent the self witnesses to it as an incarnate in otherness. To give up one's soul for another must coincide with sacrifice for another. And in such ethical transcendence, the self reduces the tendency of consciousness to betray the divine word. This is related to Levinas' idea of gift in connection with "the third" which we will refer to later in this chapter.

The comment in this section must also focus on the Levinasian idea of "incarnation". For Levinas, this is an ethical metaphysical conception of the extent to which the self is exposed to the sufferings and failures of the Other. Precisely, it expresses the impossibility of escaping responsibility for the Other in the concrete.[160] It deals with the flesh and blood reality of the Other and oneself, or as Levinas would say, it is "being-in-

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[156] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 112-113.
[157] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 112-115.
[158] Levinas writes: "Hospitality, the on-for-the-other in the ego, delivers it more passively than any passivity from links in a causal chain. Being torn from oneself for another in giving to the other the bread from one's mouth is being able to give up one's soul for another". See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 79,147, 151.
[159] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 151.
[160] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 89.

one's-skin, having-the-other-in-one's skin".[161] To this degree, incarnation is a mode of that substitution by which the self inverts its identity and moves from being for-itself to being for-others. Incarnation, then, is one among the many terms that feed into Levinasian understanding of passivity. For this thesis, it will prove to be an important consideration, as we shall see more extensively throughout Chapter Four.

Finally, Levinas proposes "bad conscience" as an example of passivity.[162] It is suggestive of the extent to which his thinking contrasts with Heidegger's description of the relationship between being "thrown" and conscience, as the call to authentic. For Heidegger, the voice of conscience stirs to pronounce, "Guilty!"[163] It overwhelms *Dasein* with the fact of its bad conscience, of its "Being-evil".[164] This voice of conscience is associated with the experience of primordial truth. Because authentic *Dasein* desires to have a conscience, this suggests its desire to discover itself in the truth of its Being-in-the-world.[165] In contrast, Levinas conceives of conscience by way of ethics. For him, a bad conscience is not the condition or result of the quest for the meaning of Being in general; nor does it imply any exposure to truth. He argues that bad conscience lies at the heart of sociality, for it is a responsibility preceding all intentionality. Bad conscience speaks in the language of ethical transcendence rather than that of experience.[166]

Prayer

Levinas acknowledges that, "Prayer is one of the most difficult subjects for a philosopher, as it is for a believer".[167] He does not disappoint when he suggests in his philosophical writings that prayer in the form of testimony, kerygma, confession and humility might well represent the very limit of recurrence.[168] Also, in an audacious Talmudic reflection,

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[161] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 115.
[162] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*. 174-175.
[163] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 336.
[164] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 336.
[165] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 343.
[166] Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 174-175.
[167] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 269.
[168] Levinas states: "Recurrence is sincerity, effusion of the self, 'extradition' of the self to the neighbour. One might, at the limit, pronounce the word *prayer* here – testimony, kerygma, confession, humility ...". See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 106. See also Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 149.

Levinas wonders whether an intentionality, distinguished from a thematising and objectivising type of intentionality, could be derived from prayer. He reflects on this prayerful intentionality as the search for an inchoate reference to an unnameable God.[169] In his ethical metaphysical discourse, this Godward reference has some similarity to the state of being affected by the trace of *illeity*. In a reflection on prayer found in both his philosophical and Talmudic writings,[170] he implies that the trace of *illeity* affects the self. He writes:

> When you are truly in distress, you can mention it in prayer. But are you going to eliminate in the manner a suffering that wipes away sins in expiating them. If you want to escape your own suffering, how will you expiate your own wrong-doings? The question is more complex. In our suffering God suffers with us. Doesn't the Psalmist say (*Psalms* 91:15): "I am with him in distress? It is God who suffers most in human suffering. The *I* who suffers prays for the suffering of God, who suffers by the sin of man and the painful expiation for sin. A kenosis of God! Prayer, altogether, is not for oneself.[171]

Levinas speaks of prayer together with God's suffering to stress that prayer is not for oneself. Levinas admits that he is doing theology in fact. Following the above-cited passage, he claims, "I have presented you with the most rigorous of theological conceptions".[172] Given his theological aside in this instance, along with similar references in his Talmudic writings, it is unwise to draw too heavy a line between his technically philosophical writings and Talmudic reflections. Although this thesis will keep mainly to the philosophical writings, the Talmudic understanding of the relation between God and the world is only but a step removed from his philosophical concerns. If "it is God who suffers most in human suffering", we may question how God might communicate such meaning. The answer, it would seem, is the suffering of God is to be found in discovering the meaning of suffering by way of radical passivity of the self in the face of the Other.

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[169] Levinas, *Beyond the Verse*, 215-216.
[170] See Levinas, *In the Time of Nations*, 130 and Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 182.
[171] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 182.
[172] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 182.

The self is thus ordered and ordained into a kenotic, if not *prayer*ful life.[173] When the suffering of the Other so intimately involves the self, the "I" is living witness to being-for-the-Other.[174] This kenotic aspect of prayer suggests a kind of conformity to the God who atones and suffers. But basically prayer is understood as related to a liturgy of responsibility. It is one aspect of the spiritually disciplined *praxis* through which the sufferings of the Other are acknowledged as sacred.[175] Levinas points in this direction when he writes:

> At the same time there is, in this being closed up within oneself of suffering, the sigh or the cry which is already a search for alterity: I would even say, but many precautions would be necessary here, that it is the first prayer. It is this first prayer that the spiritual really begins. And by saying prayer, evidently I anticipate the word *God*. But I think this exteriority of which I speak, this intending of the face ... is always at once the approach of the face and a hearkening to the voice of God.[176]

The passage comes from a reflection, "Useless Suffering".[177] Though suffering is likened to the lived experience of colour, sound and contact, it transcends any ordinary mode of consciousness. Suffering results from the radical passivity that receptivity to the Other demands. Levinas on occasion suggests that suffering is the originating condition or locus in which passivity is realised.[178] In this condition of suffering, the self is held accountable. It feels too the painful question as to whether suffering is for nothing. But his personal experience of "useless" suffering becomes productive precisely as suffering for the Other's pointless suffering. This kind of comprehensive compassion, "... opens suffering to the ethical perspective of the inter-human".[179] In this perspective, the passivity of consciousness ceases to be purely subjective, and becomes truly intersubjective and interpersonal. It is not the result of an imposed ontological theodicy or a generalised notion of suffering, but is entirely governed by the person to person relationship, the self in its openness to the approach of the actual suffering Other. It goes

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[173] The term, "ordered" (*Ordonné*), implies a double meaning of being ordered and ordained by the Other's otherness to be responsible. Levinas states: "The word '*ordonné*' in French means both having received orders and having been consecrated. It is in this sense that I can say that consciousness, subjectivity, no longer have first place in their relationship to the other". See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 111.
[174] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 146.
[175] See Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, xiv.
[176] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 57.
[177] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 91-101.
[178] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 91-92.
[179] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 94.

beyond calculation and expectation of reciprocity.[180] In this regard, the value of prayer and liturgy can never be reduced to the spiritual cultivation of oneself alone.[181]

Having a Sense

Levinas seeks to overcome the difficulty of describing experience that defies objectivity and thematic consciousness by elaborating the notion of "having a sense".[182] Here he refers to the example of love. This has some similarities to a broader philosophical and theological tradition on "affective" or "connatural knowledge", which give primacy to love over conceptual or rational cognition.[183] He does not, of course, rely on the metaphysical or psychological framework that this tradition assumes. He writes:

> But "to have a sense" does not mean the same as "to represent." The act of love has a sense, but this does not mean that it includes a representation of the object loved together with a purely *subjective* feeling which has no sense and which accompanies the representation. The characteristic of the loved object is precisely to be given in a love intention, an intention which is irreducible to a purely theoretical representation.[184]

This passage, coming from Levinas' earliest writings, is remarkable, not only for his understanding of the affectivity involved in our knowledge of the Other, but also in its notable similarity to those strands of sapiential or mystical affectivity that are found in the scholastic tradition and in its current developments. For Levinas, however, this affectivity enters precisely into his descriptions of ethical consciousness, as it relates to the Other beyond any abstract form of representation. Experiences such as love cannot be contained, as it were, in egoistic or inner subjective consciousness. In love, consciousness transcends itself beyond the range of intellectual, moral or culturally

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[180] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 101.
[181] See Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 181.
[182] Horner has also discussed Levinas' idea of "having a sense". She points out that Levinas overcomes the difficulties of Husserl's idea of intentionality through developing the idea of "having a sense". See Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 49.
[183] See, for example, Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 122-123. Lonergan writes, "Our love reveals to us values we had not appreciated, values of prayer and worship, or repentance and belief. But if we would know what is going on within us, if we would learn to integrate it with the rest of our living, we have to inquire, investigate, seek counsel. So it is that in religious matters love precedes knowledge and, as that love is God's gift, the very beginning of faith is due to God's grace".
[184] Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, translated by André Orianne, Second Edition (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 44-45.

conditioned objectification. In short, by distinguishing representation from "having a sense", Levinas indicates his concrete ethical concern to transcend purely theoretical analysis. In a later development, he will move more consistently beyond both Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian fundamental ontology into the realm of alterity. His "having a sense" is set in contrast to any presumption of apprehending Being. The following dense passage illustrates this point:

> But the face, wholly open, can at the same time be in itself because it is in the trace of illeity. Illeity is the origin of the alterity of being in which the *in itself* of objectivity participates while also betraying it.
> The God who passed is not the model of which the face would be an image. To be in the image of God does not mean to be an icon of God but to find oneself in his trace. The revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality maintains all the infinity of his absence, which is the personal "order" itself. He shows himself only by his trace, as is said in Exodus 33. To go toward Him is not to follow this trace, which is not a sign; it is through this illeity, situated beyond the calculations and reciprocities of economy and of the world, that being has a sense. A sense which is not a finality.[185]

These words illustrate, first of all, Levinas' post-phenomenological inversion of Husserl's thought. Consciousness of "something" is inverted into an absolute passivity in the face of the Other. Second, it illustrates his departure from Heidegger. The subject is not defined by care for itself, and its finite thinking no longer simply refers to the infinite. For Levinas' ethical emphasis, the Other's approach inverts the ego. The finitude of being for-oneself is turned inside out toward the infinity of being for-the-other. We note, too, that Levinas connects the face and the trace of *illeity*. The face can be in itself, in a fragile objectivity, because of the trace of *illeity*. However, the *in itself* of objectivity betrays alterity by arresting the movement of openness to the Other, due to the tendency to abstract and thematise. There is a recurrent tension within the self between ethical and self-referential behaviour.

Later, in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas develops the idea of *in itself* by employing the German terms, *an sich* and *in sich*, in reference to the self-recurrent character of the self, in its authentic desire to remain on the hither side of the moral responsibility which

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[185] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64.

exceeds all calculation.[186] For Levinas, the *in itself* of the self can be fully realised only in the life of disinterestedness. Levinas allows that, "... the face, wholly open, can at the same time be in itself because it is in the trace of illeity". This is a helpful clarification in that the trace helps to clarify that the trace of *illeity* in the Other's face disturbs the self's consciousness to the point where the self becomes aware of that truth that it is more fully itself when it is for-the-other. This is a more ethical and metaphysical view of the *in itself* compared with self simply "being 'turned' to another" or "being turned inside out".[187]

Levinas' later writings[188] confirm that the trace of *illeity* is both unrepresentable and non-thematisable. In terms of the longer passage cited above, I would suggest that through the idea of *illeity* Levinas seeks to resolve the impossibility of Being "having a sense". For the trace of *illeity* awakens a sense of God in Being, but without permitting God's divinity be reduced to an objectification or any representable image. Levinas states later in *Otherwise than Being* that the trace of *illeity* is not a sign. He means rather that, the self itself becomes a sign, testifying to having been provoked into responsibility by *illeity*.[189]

According to Levinas, *illeity* is "situated beyond the calculations and reciprocities of economy and of the world". This indicates a non-phenomenal link between the ethical self, the Other and *illeity*: the ethical self signals responsibility for the Other without disclosing and proving anything about the trace of *illeity* (God's trace). The self can do this because it has a sense in Being which implies no finality. The non-finality is neccessary because the trace of *illeity* has imposed on the self a life of bearing testimony, but in a way that is absolutely detached from comprehending the meaning and invoking – or controlling – it as an ongoing, conscious presence. What is implied here is the indirect

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[186] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 108.
[187] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49.
[188] See, for example, Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 150, 162.
[189] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49, 144-151.

way (beyond essence) of the manner in which God directs the self to be responsible, and to be a sign of alliance with the Other.[190]

In the resulting disinterestedness the synchrony of Being and peace takes form.[191] As consciousness goes towards something other, there occurs a proximity with "the third" – in a pacific relationship of justice with others. The following passage condenses these themes:

> ... it is on the basis of proximity that being takes on its just meaning. In the indirect ways of illeity, in the anarchical provocation which ordains me to the other, is imposed the way which leads to thematisation and becoming conscious. Becoming conscious is motivated by the presence of the third alongside the neighbour approached. The third is also approached; and the relationship between the neighbour and the third cannot be indifferent to me when I approach. There must be justice among incomparable ones. ... In this disinterestedness – when, as a responsibility for the other, it is also a responsibility for the third – the justice that compares, assembles, and conceives, the synchrony of being and peace, takes form.[192]

To summarise: so far, I have shown how Levinas' having a sense (non-thematisable consciousness) is related to being in Being through the trace of *illeity*. I have further argued that having a sense in Being means that the self becomes an unthematisable sign of God's trace. For the self cannot reduce God to a presence in consciousness because it exceeds all thought and language. There is, however, a way for Being to take on a just meaning, without implying that alterity is a function of Being. It is only through the indirect ways of *illeity* that Being must be understood. In other words, although the "otherwise than Being" (alterity) is outside the ontological order, it is understood, nonetheless, as in Being.[193] The ideas of "in Being" and "beyond Being" are not separable, even if ambiguity is an inevitable outcome. If justice is to come to expression, some thematisation and intentional form of consciousness are required.

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[190] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49. Levinas writes: "The subject of saying does not give signs, it becomes a sign, turns into an allegiance".
[191] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 123.
[192] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 16. The passage is also found in Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 122-123.
[193] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 16.

We can offer some possible further clarification. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas states that proximity, the very refusal of presence, converts "into my presence as present, that is, as a hostage delivered over as a gift to the other".[194] This would seem to suggest that the gift has to be betrayed by presence in order to be given. However, despite the betrayal or the inevitability of thematisation and consciousness, the gift contains within it the trace of the passing of God (*illeity*). But there is a further complication. What delivers the gift over to presence and thematisation is the interruption of "the third party" or "the absent other" (who is also a neighbour of the Other).[195] In addition to what we noted above, there are three aspects of "the third" as Levinas understands it.

- "The third" is concretely manifested in suffering and the cry for justice.[196]
- "The third" imposes limits upon the extent to which self is responsible. Although responsibility is never mitigated, the self cannot ever fulfil its responsibilities.
- "The third" is the very fact of consciousness for it demands that the self measure and know its cry for justice.[197] As a result, "the third" gives rise to a dialectical relationship between justice and totality, even if the totality must be finally transcended.[198]

We are now in a position to clarify Levinas' conception of the synchrony of Being and peace which takes form through responsibility for "the third". I would suggest that, for Levinas, the presence of "the third" enters consciousness to inspire the rationality of peace. In other words, the self's recognition of "the third", inspired by *illeity* in the face of the Other, produces the work of justice. Such work of justice signifies the foundation of consciousness, the help of God and the interruption of Being.[199] "To have a sense" in Being is to be ambiguously otherwise than Being (disinterested). We have, then, an understanding of consciousness in which the knowledge of Being and peace might take form. This suggests that the knowledge of Being is not found in Being, but through being "otherwise", that is, establishing justice and peace through responsibility for others. And

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[194] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 151.
[195] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 150, 157.
[196] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 39 and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.
[197] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.
[198] See Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas, The Problem of Metaphysics*, 108.
[199] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 160.

in this ambiguity of being in Being through the trace of *illeity* is "... the very possibility of gift ... the subversion of essence into substitution".[200]

Truth

We come to Levinas' notion of truth, which obviously pervades and affects all the other terms and categories so far discussed. In both Levinas' Talmudic and philosophical writings, truth is articulated in connection with the ideas of persecution and humiliation, goodness, and transcendence. Significantly for the thesis, it is, never related to the "borrowed light" of beauty.[201] For Levinas the reason for this is clear: beauty results in idolisation, and philosophy certainly does not begin in aesthetics.[202] By way of contrast, Levinas asks, "But isn't what we really call the truth determined by the 'for-the-other,' which means goodness?"[203] The way of truth is found in humiliation and persecution, within God's covenantal relation with those on the margins of society. He will therefore speak of a "persecuted truth" in a manner far from the idea of truth as unconcealedness or as a presence in consciousness. The transcendent impact of truth is felt by being exposed to the destitution of the Other. It is found in the trace or proximity of God in the Other's face. In his every move, Levinas wishes to protect God's transcendence from onto-theological conceptions.

For Levinas, truth never depends on transcendental knowledge nor on the unconcealment of Being. Here, Heidegger's and Levinas' conceptions of truth can be contrasted. Both philosophers are critical of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in which the meaning of truth and Being begins with lived experience.[204] Instead of using Husserl's language of subject and object, for example, Heidegger characterises the object as related to the meaning of Being in general (the Being of entities), whereas the subject is related to *Dasein* (being there[205]), the locus of the existential analysis intent on disclosing and

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[200] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.
[201] See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 74 and Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 8, 100.
[202] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 8, 100.
[203] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 263.
[204] See Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, 4.
[205] Da-sein: literally Being-there or "the "there" (*Da*) where being (*Sein*) shows itself". See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell

even clarify the meaning of Being. In this way, his notion of *Dasein* moves beyond Husserl's *noesis-noema* structure of consciousness. But in contrast to Heidegger, Levinas aims at an ethical subjectivity beyond any form of philosophical objectivity. Truth does not depend on objectivity and the meaning of Being in general, since it is more a testimony of responsibility for the Other, transcending the *conatus* of philosophical intelligence.[206]

Heidegger approached the idea of truth as the unconcealment of Being. For him, transcendental knowledge is an ambiguous unconcealment of Being: for the Being of entities remains hidden. Ambiguously, Being reveals itself by disclosing or by covering up itself. Accordingly, a forgetfulness of Being and its meaning can arise. The problem for Heidegger is how to arrive at phenomenological truth. *Being and Time* is his attempt to probe this enigma through an existential-ontological analysis of *Dasein* - which bears the fundamental structure of Being-in-the-world and discovers its meaning in temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*). For the most part, *Dasein* is realised in an inauthentic routinised form of consciousness, dependent on what is called the "they-self". To give one example, Heidegger explains that the common sense of the "they-self" "knows only the satisfying of manipulable rules and the public norms and the failure to satisfy them".[207] Where Heidegger sees truth as the quest for the disclosure of the unknown in Being,[208] Levinas understands truth as the testimony of responsibility on "the hither side" of the self's freedom.[209] Levinas' conception of truth resists any Heideggerian thematisation. It is beyond all totalising explanations.

For Levinas, then, truth is neither a discovery and nor a transcendental quality of Being.[210] It is located in the transcendence of ethics. This is to say that ethical transcendence cannot be explained in consciousness, but has already effaced or withdrawn from it. It is found rather in persecution and humiliation. Levinas' notion of a

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Publishers, 1995), 27; Robert Dostall, "Time and Phenomenology," in Charles Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 152.

[206] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 102-103.

[207] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 334.

[208] See Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 230.

[209] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 101-103.

[210] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 100.

"persecuted truth" overcomes the problem of reductive immanence and refuses to play "the game of unveiling".[211] Rather, truth is found only by dwelling with the contrite and humble (Isa. 57:15).[212] It signifies an eschatological-messianic existence.

Here, Levinas connects Messianism with the self's condition as a hostage: "Messianism is that apogee in Being – a reversal of being 'persevering in his being' – which begins in me".[213] His philosophical discourse is redolent of Biblical and eschatological themes, as we remarked previously. In this regard, the transcendence of exposing oneself to the Other's outrage and suffering is not just an ethical stance, but also messianic. Truth, then, is not only "otherwise than Being"; it also belongs to the unthematisable realm of a biblical God. In such a context, truth is not a discovery, nor an experience, but found in the testimony of suffering and expiating for the Other.

Ethical Transcendence

To clarify, finally, Levinas' concept of ethical transcendence, it is helpful to note how it developed from Husserl's idea of intentionality. According to Levinas, consciousness, in the sense of representation, implies presence. In reference to Husserl's idea of intentionality, he distinguishes between two types of consciousness, namely, the non-intentional and the intentional. He describes intentional consciousness as reflection; it objectifies the I, lived experience and mental acts. In other words, intentional consciousness is consciousness of something. In contrast, Levinas describes non-intentional consciousness as an unreflective form of consciousness. This unreflective quality lies in the fact that the sense data (*hyle*) in lived experience are non-explicit and not necessarily objectified in consciousness.[214] A confusion in the act of reflection results. The reflection proper to intentional consciousness can forget its own limitations. As a result, reflection brings to light only a confused representation of data so that any explanation of the world occurs in a context marked with obscurity.

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[211] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56.
[212] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57.
[213] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 60.
[214] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 172-173.

However, Levinas' discussion of consciousness does not end simply with the recognition of confusion and obscurity. Levinas comes to accept that non-intentional consciousness can have a positive value for reflection.[215] He writes:

> "Does the 'knowledge' of the prereflective self-consciousness *know*, properly speaking? As a dim consciousness, an implicit consciousness preceding all intentions – or coming back from intentions – it is not an act, but rather pure passivity? It is a passivity not only by way of its being-without-having-chosen-to-be, or by its fall into a pell-mell of possibilities already realised before any assumption, as in the Heideggerian *Geworfenheit*. It is a 'consciousness' that, rather than signifying a self-knowledge, is effacement or discretion of presence".[216]

Levinas' understanding of pre-reflective consciousness clearly differs from Husserlian and Heideggerian accounts. Admittedly, Heidegger's analysis of "the hammer" in *Being and Time* does have some similarity to Levinas' notion of a non-theoretical consciousness, especially where he emphasises that the more one uses the hammer, the more primordial one's relationship becomes. But, unlike Levinas, Heidegger is searching to encounter the kind of unveiled Being which a thing (like a hammer) possesses.[217]

Let us look at Levinas' rejection of Husserl's idea of consciousness as an act. It assumes a correlation of the *noesis* and *noema*. For Husserl, the *noesis* is the act of consciousness itself, whilst the *noema* gives visibility to Being.[218] But Levinas rejects this correlation. He is concerned to isolate the positive value of non-intentionality. And this, in turn, will lead to his ideas of pure passivity and immemoriality. He understands a pre-reflective consciousness in its possible bearing on an ethical metaphysical conception of consciousness. Here, his thought has parallels with Descartes' idea of the Infinite in which thought overwhelms consciousness, as he conceives of a *noesis* without a *noema*.[219] In other words, the act of consciousness itself (the *noesis*) is to be conceived as simply correlative to an object in an objectifying act (the *noema*). It is more than mere

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[215] Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 173.
[216] Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 173-174.
[217] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 98. Heidegger writes: "No matter how sharply we just *look* at the 'outward appearance' of Things in whatever form this takes, we cannot discover anything ready-to-hand. If we just look at things 'theoretically', we can get along without understanding readiness-to-hand".
[218] See Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, 22-23.
[219] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 175 and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 146-147.

representation. Levinas instances the act of love as "having a sense" of that which overwhelms the self's consciousness.[220] To understand that the act of love is irreducible to representation is to grasp more clearly what Levinas means by an implicit consciousness preceding all (representable) intentions.

In the Levinasian perspective, the non-intentionality of consciousness precedes the common intentions of consciousness – such as the acts of joy, desire, valorisation, will and judgment. For such acts have their foundation in the act of pure representation.[221] We have referred already to Levinas' example of the act of love as irreducible to representation.[222] The manner in which love precedes the common intentions of consciousness is linked to Levinas' description of passivity. In this regard, the act of love is paradoxically more passive than active. Though Levinas does not refer to his idea of "having a sense" as an instance of the passivity he describes, he does connect it to the trace of *illeity* as will be mentioned in the Chapter Four (God, Theology and the Limits of Phenomenology).

In the passage cited above, Levinas makes a reference to the Heideggerian idea of "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*), one of the three major features of *Dasein*, (along with "existence" and "falling").[223] Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* contrasts with Levinas' philosophical discourse on a number of key points. First, Heidegger distinguishes two types of existence, inauthentic and authentic. Inauthentic existence is related to the everyday kind of Being-in-the-world of the "they-self". Heidegger is highly critical of this routine mode of Being. The states of mind, modes of understanding and types of discourse associated with it, disclose the presence of entities in an inauthentic manner. Inauthentic existence is characterised phenomenally as idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity; it results in what Heidegger names as the movement of falling. As a result of this "downward plunge (*Absturz*)",[224] *Dasein* falls into the "turbulence" (*Wirbel*) of the they-

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[220] See Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, 44 and Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 49.
[221] See Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, 44.
[222] See Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, 44.
[223] See Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 218.
[224] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 223.

self's inauthenticity. Heidegger names this phenomenal unveiling of facticity as "thrownness".[225] While this seems to imply mostly inauthentic existence, when it takes the form of an authentic existence, it finds itself in an unfamiliar realm of conscience.[226] Here, it is sufficient to point out that Heidegger develops his unique vocabulary to give an existential-ontological interpretation of the corruption of human nature can lead to *Dasein*'s discovery of authentic existence.

Just as Levinas is not convinced of Husserl's emphasis on the objectivity of lived experience, so he also questions the ontological foundation of Heidegger's phenomenology. [227] Because the idea of thrownness evokes "a pell-mell of possibilities", [228] Levinas devises another vocabulary. He does not focus on the corruption of human nature and its possibilities for human existence, but speak of ethical transcendence. He begins by probing the passivity which precedes all representational, axiological and practical forms of consciousness. For him, consciousness is not thematic; it precedes both cognition and commitment:

> Consciousness in all its forms – representational, axiological, practical – has already lost this close presence [that is, the very proximity of beings]. The fact that the neighbour does not enter into a them, that in a certain sense he precedes cognition and commitment, is neither a blinding nor an indifference; it is a rectitude of relationship more tense than intentionality: the neighbour summons me.[229]

As a result of ethical transcendence, consciousness reverts into what Levinas terms an "obsession", that is, "a responsibility without choice".[230] We have recalled these points of contrast with Husserl and Heidegger to ward off the tendency to relapse into a theological discourse based in totality and presence.

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[225] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 210-224.
[226] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 321-322.
[227] For a helpful discussion of Levinas, Husserl and Heidegger, see Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 43-60.
[228] Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 174.
[229] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 120.
[230] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 120.

Conclusion: Levinas and Christian Theology

Under eleven headings, I referred to some fifty terms in the Levinasian lexicon. These terms will in different figure appear in the vocabulary of our critique of von Balthasar's trilogy as we attempt to develop a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*. The Levinasian vocabulary, despite its daunting complexity, aims at forging a language of alterity. While such language contests the totalising language of any theology, I will attempt to argue that ethics is not just "first philosophy", as Levinas understands it, but also "first theology". For both theology and philosophy are called upon to be the wisdom of love at the service of love. We must note that this is also Purcell's primary concern in his thoughtful reading of Levinas in a theological context.[231] Purcell, however, by connecting, for example, the ideas of the Good and Being,[232] departs, it seems to me, from a Levinasian framework, as we shall explain. My aim is to be as faithful as possible to Levinas' philosophical discourse on its own terms, and so bring it into a fruitful conversation with theology. I will be arguing that ethical subjectivity on the one hand, and the language of alterity, on the other, form the most promising context for critical theology today.

Up to this stage of our rather complex and schematic analysis, I must recognise a number of problematical dichotomies in his thought, each one of which deserves a thesis in itself. To give some examples, the problems inherent in relating subjectivity and objectivity, theodicy and useless suffering, the self and the Other, totality and infinity, Being and otherwise than Being, experience and encounter, and so on, are not small. My efforts so far will lead no doubt to a considerable amount of theological vertigo. The theological task of employing this language of alterity is surely fraught with dangers, and the reader can be overwhelmed by a barrage of neologisms, historical associations and phases of development. But to see only the dangers and not to risk the opportunities for greater theological creativity latent in Levinas' thought, would be to evade a responsibility.

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[231] See Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, xii.
[232] See Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 297, 327.

After all, a number of Christian and theological notions[233] appear in Levinas' writings, along with references to the New Testament,[234] especially in areas of common concern to both Christianity and Judaism.[235] This fact alone provides a helpful context, even though it must be admitted that Levinas, to the degree that he engaged Christian theology exhibits a highly critical approach. It remains, however, that he summons theology to find its starting point in the face of the suffering neighbour, and this is hardly a position foreign to the New Testament. I am not suggesting that the whole complex of intricate and interrelated terms we have referred to in the course of this chapter can be uncritically applied to theological and Christian thinking. None the less, the Levinasian lexicon abounds with possibilities for the development of new thought forms and linguistic usages that can only enrich theological discourse, especially when we come to grapple with rich content and refined methodology of a writer such as von Balthasar. Besides, as was already mentioned, both Levinas and von Balthasar draw on the same phenomenological tradition.

And there are limitations in Levinas that must be acknowledged. The problematical dichotomies referred to above are one aspect of the sheer complexity of his thought, and, for all the sublimity of the description of ethical encounter, he is not quite capable of expressing it in practical terms, as Gillian Rose has pointed out.[236] But perhaps paradoxically such a limitation is its strength, in that his creative and deeply concerned style of thought can never be reduced to any one interpretation in the challenge of introducing the language of alterity into theological thinking.

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[233] The notions of the Man-God (Incarnation), transubstantiation, the eucharist and communion. See Levinas' essays, "A Man-God?" in *Entre Nous*, 53-53 and "Judaism and Christianity," in *In the Time of Nations*, 161-166.

[234] Matt 25; Phil 2:6-8; 1 Jn 2:23 and 4:12. See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 110; Levinas, *In the Time of Nations*, 114; and Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 49.

[235] Such as prayer, the *imago Dei* relationship and kenosis. In the case of kenosis, Levinas states: "I am pleased to accept the parallelism in the theory of kenosis, and in the idea of an omni-human universality and a "for all men". I have understood Christianity in its "to live and die for all men." See Levinas, *In the Time of Nations*, 164.

[236] Rose reflects: "Their inhibition with respect to law means that neither Weil nor Levinas is able to bring the sublime into the pedestrian, to suspend and resume the ethical with its features of modern state and society". See Gillian Rose, "Angry Angels –Simone Weil and Emmanuel Levinas" in *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 221.

Our attempt to develop a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis* will build upon both the Levinasian language of alterity, and insights gained from von Balthasar's trilogy even if there are great differences in the respective approaches of these two thinkers. I have chosen the phrase "Trinitarian *praxis*" to suggest that von Balthasar's theology and recent Christian readings of Levinas need to be shorn of their totalising propensities, and their consequent need to admit a greater sense of alterity in their approaches. Whether this is possible, or whether I have succeeded, the reader will judge. As a first step, the next chapter will present a Levinasian reading of von Balthasar's theological aesthetics.

Chapter 3 Von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics

Introduction

The chapter will firstly introduce von Balthasar's theology, give particular points of contrast between Levinas and von Balthasar and suggest how von Balthasar's theology could profit from exposure to Levinas' thought. It will then set out to re-interpret von Balthasar's treatment of the triune drama of Holy Saturday and of the Resurrection by integrating Levinas' ideas.

Von Balthasar's theology, exemplified *par excellence* in the trilogy, is both revelation-centred and Trinitarian. It is structured on analogical conceptions of the transcendental reality of Being and of the relation between creaturely and God's truth. Von Balthasar writes:

> From first to last, the trilogy is keyed to the transcendental qualities of being, in particular to the analogy between their status and form in creaturely being, on the one hand, and in Divine Being, on the other. Thus, there is a correspondence between worldly "beauty" and divine "glory" in the *Aesthetics* and between worldly, finite freedom in the *Drama*. By the same token, our task in the present theological *Logic* will be to reflect upon the relationship between the structure of creaturely truth and the structure of divine truth. This reflection will set the stage for an inquiry into whether God's truth can exhibit and express itself (in various forms) within the structures of creaturely truth. By its very nature, theological insight into God's glory, goodness and truth presupposes an *ontological*, and not merely formal or gnoseological, infrastructure of worldly being. Without philosophy, there can be no theology.[1]

The passage firstly implies two important analogies pervading von Balthasar's theological trilogy, the analogy of the transcendentals and the analogy of Being. First, the analogy of the transcendentals is used both to approach the qualities of God's Being revealed in Christ and to structure his methodology of *Theological Aesthetics*, *Theo-Drama* and *Theo-Logic*. On the one hand, he speaks of the inseparable relation between the philosophical transcendentals of the beautiful, the good, the true and the one; and on

[1] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Theological Logical Theory, Vol. I: The Truth of the World*, translated by Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 7.

the other, he specifies the theological transcendental of glory. Both are related in an indissoluble unity.[2]

Von Balthasar names the beautiful as the starting point for the trilogy: "Beauty is the word that shall be our first".[3] For him, the determination of God's Being must begin with aesthetics. Primarily, revelation radiates triune love in the form of true beauty, which he equates with disinterestedness.[4] For the believer, the experience of the beautiful is conveyed by receiving the Holy Spirit, responding to the divine vocation, and acknowledging the Son as a member of the Trinity. To believe is to participate in the revelation of Trinitarian love. As a result, the creature is moved and possessed by the beautiful. Furthermore, such an epiphany of the beauty of Being produces a Spirit-inspired consciousness. The creature is enabled to grasp that Being unveils itself to the world as Trinitarian love. In the light of Being, the creature can perceive the divine light and experience the ecstatic overture of faith.[5] Describing Spirit-inspired consciousness, von Balthasar writes: "Here we simply speak of the participation of man's entire sensitivity in the manner in which God experiences the divine".[6]

Following von Balthasar's exploration of divine self-revelation to human beings (aesthetics), he proceeds to examine how God enables human beings to follow the ways of God (*theo-drama*), and how the infinite truth of the divine *Logos* can express itself (*theo-logic*).[7] I shall leave my introductory analysis of theo-drama and theo-logic to Chapters Four and Five respectively. Here we note that the transcendental of the beautiful always includes the values of the good and the true in itself; they are inseparable,

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[2] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. VII, Theology: The New Covenant*, translated by Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 18, 242-243.
[3] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. I, Seeing the Form*, translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 18.
[4] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 18, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *My Work: In Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 80, and also Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 37.
[5] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 158-159, 246-249.
[6] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 249.
[7] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 21.

evidenced in the Being of the world and hence in God, the source and ground of all Being.[8]

In the passage above, von Balthasar expressly states that theology presupposes an ontological structure of worldly Being. However such an ontological structure is permeated by supernatural Being.[9] This implication is perhaps best exemplified in the question, "How, ontologically speaking, can God become man, or, to phrase the question differently: Does creaturely *logos* have the carrying capacity to harbour the divine Logos in itself?"[10] At stake is von Balthasar's desire to develop the analogy of Being more profoundly in the light of the event of revelation. Hence, analogy is not just dependent on the ontological structure of worldly Being, but is also anchored in God.[11]

The analogy of Being speaks of the similarity and the ever greater dissimilarity between God and humanity. For von Balthasar, it finds its greatest perfection in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Christ is the archetype *par excellence* for access to God. The analogy of Being is also the foundation for the analogy of the Transcendentals.[12] This connection signifies the most difficult question of von Balthasar's trilogy, namely how the circumincessive relation of the transcendentals might reveal the creature as an image and likeness of God's Being. The question can be answered only insofar within a theological and Trinitarian horizon.[13] The fundamental significance of this question bears on the ontological unveiling of God's revelation to the creature on the one hand, and on the ontological unveiling of the creature before God, on the other. It touches, therefore, on the objective and subjective experience of God. Because von Balthasar's prioritises the beautiful, the relation between God and the creature favours an aesthetic starting point.

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[8] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 158 and Henrici, "The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," 165.
[9] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 12.
[10] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 8.
[11] See Henrici, "The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," 166.
[12] Angelo Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar. A Theological Style* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 31, 54; Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 23; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 118; and O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 4-5.
[13] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 9-10.

God's Being in Christ is an experience to be savoured with the eyes of faith. Let us look further, then, at von Balthasar's notion of experience.

To describe the apophatic experience of faith, von Balthasar employs the German words, *Erfahren*, *Erfahrung* and *Einfahren*.[14] Commentators such as Nichols and O'Donnell maintain that *Erfahren* is the prevalent form.[15] In one example, von Balthasar writes:

> As an attitude, faith is the surrender of one's own experience to the experience of Christ, and Christ's experience is one of kenotic humiliation and self-renunciation, a reality which, as we have seen, rests on the foundation of Christ's hypostatic consciousness as Redeemer. For this reason, in 'mysticism' every deeper experience (*Erfahrung*) of God will be a deeper entering into (*Einfahren*) the 'non-experience' of faith, into the loving renunciation of experience, all the way into the depths of the 'Dark Nights' of John of the Cross, which constitute the real mystical training for the ultimate renunciations. But these 'nights' are precisely an '*experience* of non-experience', or an experience of the negative, private mode of experience, as a participation in the total archetypal experience of the Old and New Testaments.[16]

Accordingly, von Balthasar conceives of experience as a loving renunciation of experience. With this apophatic emphasis, faith is more a self-emptying experience, as it makes space and gives time to participating in the event of God's revelation. From this point of view, faith is an attitude of surrendering oneself to Christ's experience of kenosis and renunciation, that is, to "Christ's hypostatic consciousness as redeemer".[17] Though von Balthasar articulates experience of faith as a journey of self-renunciation in order to participate in Christ's consciousness, there is an implication of another type of experience, namely, "lived experience", signified in the word, *Erlebnis*. We see that von Balthasar is aware of this in his description of G. Koch's theology of the Resurrection[18]: the relationship between God's gift in Christ and the creature is "an originating relationship

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[14] Distinguishing between the German meaning of *Erfahren* and *Erfahrung*, Inwood writes: "...*erfahren* from *fahren*, 'to go, travel, etc.', hence lit. 'to go forth', has a more external quality. It can mean 'to learn, find out, hear of', but also 'to receive, undergo', something. An *Erfahrung* is an experience as, or of, an external, objective event, and the lessons one learns from such events". See Inwood, *The Heidegger Dictionary*, 62.

[15] For a discussion of von Balthasar's use of the German word for experience (*Erfahren*), see Aidan Nichols, *Say It Is Pentecost. A Guide Through Balthasar's Logic* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke Ltd, 2001), 152 and O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 24.

[16] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 412-413.

[17] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 412.

[18] See G. Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Tübingen, 1965).

(like the *noēma* and *noēsis* of Husserl), existing only as personally actualised, which means to say in mutual encounter".[19]

To what extent, then, is this "originating relationship" of mutual encounter dependent on the Husserlian idea of the unity between the *noesis* and *noema*? From a Husserlian perspective, it might appear that von Balthasar is referring to a thought, a *noesis*, namely humanity's participation in God. From the divine perspective, this *noesis* is actualised as revelation; and from the human perspective it is actualised as faith.[20] As regards the human perspective, faith involves knowledge and hence a partial understanding of God. This would entail a sense of a relationship between the *noesis* and the *noema*. There is an indissoluble reciprocal relationship between humanity's participation in God (*noesis*) on the one hand, and, on the other, a partial conception of it (*noema*). But this is not a strict lived experience in the Husserlian sense. It would be more accurate to say that it is an experience of divine revelation in which the consciousness of the believer freely surrenders itself to the divine consciousness. Although von Balthasar's idea of experience is usually expressed in terms of *Erfahren*, to what extent then might it also have an underlying sense of *Erlebnis*? What evidence is there to support this claim?

In von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, faith and revelation speak of "*ekstasis* – God's 'venturing forth' to man and man's to God".[21] This could aptly be described as a phenomenology of *ekstasis*.[22] In other words, within the horizon of the primal phenomenon of the beautiful, theology catches a glimpse of faith and revelation in the mutual encounter between God and the human self. Even though von Balthasar questions Koch's identification of the Resurrection with appearance, his writings none the less show evidence that he falls back into Koch's understanding of an originating relationship in the Husserlian sense. Just as there is an indissoluble relation between the *noesis* and

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[19] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale. The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1990), 216.
[20] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 125.
[21] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 126.
[22] In another example emphasising von Balthasar's phenomenology, Gardner and Moss give the example of his phenomenology of *diastasis*. See Lucy Gardner and David Moss, "Something like Time; Something like the Sexes," in Lucy Gardner et. al., *Balthasar At The End of Modernity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999), 85-86.

noema of Husserl, so there is one with humanity and God. It is a "lived experience", with God at some level being represented in the consciousness of such experience. For example, von Balthasar writes: "God is known as mystery in the form of self-consciousness. In the small mystery of its self-apprehension in its inner light, in its personality and freedom, self-consciousness catches a glimmer of what the infinite identity of and freedom of the divine truth might be".[23]

In my view, the sense of "self-apprehension" possesses elements of the Husserlian analogy of appresentation.[24] After all, von Balthasar works not just within a Trinitarian horizon, but within a worldly one. It is therefore not surprising in the theo-logic, in regard to the first act of knowing, that von Balthasar states the creature uses the analogy of consciousness to grasp God's existence. As a result, the created subject knows that it apprehends only a part of eternal truth.[25] This implies that there is at least some level of *Erlebnis* before the creature has an experience of faith as *Erfahren* in the sense of the self's journey of participating in Christ.

Furthermore, as will be argued later in Chapter Five, we find that von Balthasar develops Heidegger's idea of truth by employing language similar to Husserl's vocabulary of representation, thus imposing limits on understanding God's Being. For instance, "The knower knows that the truth he apprehends is only a part or an irradiation of the total truth in which he is embedded".[26] Yet this apprehension of this truth is also a participation in God's revelation and a free surrender to the sphere of divine truth. Though faith is like a journey to God (*Erfahrung*), there is a suggestion that there is also lived experience (*Erlebnis*), in the form of internalising, on a worldly level, the ontological unveiling of God's mystery.[27] Later in the chapter, I will return to this question.

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[23] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 272.
[24] Von Balthasar also emphasises the importance of representation when he reflects on the relation between finitude and infinity. See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 244-254.
[25] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 260-261.
[26] For example, see von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 261.
[27] see von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 244-249.

It remains, however, in contrast to implicit acceptance of Husserlian terminology, that von Balthasar shows a more explicit interest in Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. For example, he has borrowed Heideggerian notions of wonder, the giftedness of Being, truth as unconcealment and human thinking as thanking and doxological outpouring.[28] Yet von Balthasar is also critical of Heidegger, especially in regard to the question of God. Chapter Four and Five will examine this matter more closely.

Up to now, I have set out to argue that von Balthasar employs a unique ontological phenomenology integrating philosophy and theology. For example, in the theological aesthetics, he recognises that the theological *a priori* can be illumined epistemologically and ontologically.[29] We could add "phenomenally" as well, since he sets out to conceive firstly of the primal phenomenon of beauty.[30] As the chapter will focus on von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, let us look briefly at its structure, developed in two interconnected stages. First, he begins with his "theory of vision" or the fundamental theology that studies the subjective experience of the form of God's self-revelation in Christ. Second, he develops a "theory of rapture" or the dogmatic theology concerning the objective evidence of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery and the believer's participation in the divine glory. For von Balthasar, the form of God's revelation in Christ when seen through the eyes of faith reveals the Trinity. Through perceiving the beautiful form and splendour of Jesus Christ in the Paschal Mystery, the believer might realise what he or she needs to know and to be. Hence, the Triune God who in Christ becomes human is known and believed.[31] Von Balthasar's theological aesthetics employs, as we have said, a distinctive language of ontology and phenomenology. Accordingly, throughout this chapter, my concern will be to see how the theological aesthetics might profit from exposure to Levinas' thought. But first, let us look at the significance for the thesis of bringing the writings of the French-Jewish Levinas and the Swiss German Catholic von Balthasar together in some form of comparison and contrast.

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[28] For a discussion of Heidegger's influence on von Balthasar, see Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 173-4.
[29] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 167.
[30] See Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 2.

von Balthasar and Levinas

Von Balthasar is a theologian with philosophical concerns. In contrast, Levinas is a philosopher with biblical-inspired concerns. They each embrace metaphysical, phenomenological, religious, cultural and political worlds that converge upon each other. Given that the Shoah had a commanding influence on Levinas' thought,[32] the Paschal Mystery, in contrast, had inspired von Balthasar's theological writings.[33] Both thinkers are pierced with passion, one for articulating responsibility for those on the margins of society, and the other for understanding the beauty, goodness and truth of God's revelation in Christ. Yet, they each provoke a different type of passion to speak of the relation between God and the world. Levinas' passion centres on moral conscience in the encounter with the Other and God, while von Balthasar's passion focuses on experiencing the beautiful form of Christ's Being and presence. We find two different contexts in which the word "God" is articulated: Levinas' ethical concerns of the suffering Other in the here and now, and von Balthasar's transcendent concentration on the Paschal Mystery and its significance in the whole human history. However, these contexts are not necessarily so far apart. They both draw from similar phenomenological and ontological traditions. Accordingly, they will both refer to the categories of objectivity, Being and presence with their own respective positions. But Levinas will go further and develop a non-phenomenal conception of alterity as a means of transcending these categories whereas von Balthasar, we will contend, will remain within them.

Phenomenology and Ontology

In comparison to Levinas' development of Husserl's and Heidegger's writings, von Balthasar takes a more positive appreciation, especially of Heidegger's in the development of his theology. This is a context in which to argue that von Balthasar's theology can profit from a more Levinasian approach. To this end, I will now speak further of von Balthasar's attachment to phenomenology and ontology. I want to argue

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[31] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 125-126.

[32] See Levinas, "Useless Suffering," in *Entre Nous*, 91-101. Also see, Zvi Kolitz, *Yosl Rakover Talks to God*, translated by Carol Brown Janeway with afterwords by Emmanuel Levinas and Leon Wieseltier (New York: Vintage Books, 1999) for a moving account of the experience of 'passion' in the *Shoah*.

that such an attachment has led him to thematise God's Being as a presence. In other words, his theology can tend to confuse the word "God" with the categories of objectivity, Being and presence. For example, von Balthasar writes:

> It follows for the internal development of *theology* that this light [the self's openness to the light of Being itself which illumines it], and no other, must control and give evidence of itself in every branch of theological speculation no matter how detailed. ... This light, which is the formal object of theology, must make itself visible in all of theology's material developments and articulations. Only then do we have a guarantee that a natural (philosophical) intellect can feel itself affected by theology and the revelation it brings.[34]

Von Balthasar articulates a sort of phenomenology of truth in which the self gazes upon the truth of the world by way of beholding its unveiling from the spiritual realm.[35] The self's openness to the light of Being is the context in which the self can grasp its reality and indeed theologise. Such grasping is both an ontological and conscious unveiling of the self before God. Von Balthasar states, "The creature must not only know that it walks in the light of God and is passively seen, but should also spontaneously offer itself to this light, participating in its ontological unveiledness by a voluntary unveiling".[36] In von Balthasar's own internal development of theology, we can see that he relies on the categories of objectivity (the self's openness to the light of Being), Being (God's Being) and presence (knowledge of God's Being and of the self in consciousness).

Such a theological approach places the mystery of God in the hands of language, experience and thought. Consequently, it is not God, but being conscious of the idea of God that is more meaningful. The search for the meaning of God's Being, especially by distinguishing God from finite beings (as exemplified in the analogy of Being) does not make the idea of God clearer; perhaps it even makes the idea of experience as *Erlebnis*

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[33] In referring to both of these 'passions,' Peperzak reflects, "How is it possible that we have not recognised the Passion in the persecuted of God's people, and why is it so difficult for Jews to recognise the same passion in the man Jesus? Peperzak, "The Significance of Levinas's Work for Christian Thought," 193.
[34] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 165.
[35] see von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 31-32, 262.
[36] see von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 270-271.

and *Erfahren* redundant. We suggest that the word "God" in von Balthasar's theology is reduced to a project of the mind searching for the meaning of Christian experience in the world. Whether such meaning is named as seeing or being enraptured by the form and splendour of God's revelation in the world, it results in articulating God within the language of ontology and presence. Thematisations of God by way of self-consciousness may indeed help to explain the creature's participation in the transcendental qualities of God's Being. However, we are left with ontological thematisations and phenomenal perceptions of God. Should then the search for the meaning of God's Being be the context in which to do theology? Here, I will argue that it is possible to speak of God through the language of alterity inspired from Levinas' philosophy.

The Language of Alterity

Levinas' writings counterbalance von Balthasar's theological method by giving it a more focused sense of transcendent alterity beyond the categories of objectivity, presence and Being. For Levinas, God is not conceived as a product of lived experience, searching for the meaning of Being and the attempt to participate in God's Being. Levinas' ideas of Otherness, desire, the face of the Other, encounter, passivity, diachrony and the *there is* give a more austere and rigorous view of God's transcendence. By exposing such ideas to von Balthasar's trilogy of aesthetics, dramatics and logic, a more focused sense of transcendent alterity might be articulated. Accordingly, in Chapter Four, I will approach von Balthasar's notion of Trinitarian "Inversion", theology of Gift and conception of the unity between Christ's *processio* and *missio* in a Levinasian framework. In Chapter Five, I will aim to recontextualise von Balthasar's idea of truth with the aid of a Levinasian ethical metaphysics; and in Chapter Six I will set out to establish a Trinitarian *praxis* by recontextualising von Balthasar's ideas of eschatological existence and the soteriological dimensions of the Eucharist with a language of theological alterity.

In this chapter, I will confine my attention to von Balthasar's theological aesthetics. In particular, I shall consider his development of the Trinitarian aspects of Holy Saturday and the Resurrection, and read this in the light of Levinas' conception of non-

phenomenality. I will show that by substituting the categories of objectivity, Being and presence in von Balthasar's thought with the Levinasian idea of the non-phenomenal, we can instance the manner in which the face of Christ exasperates the logic of a world detached from ethical responsibility. The logic of a biblical God is confounding in Christ's suffering, death, solidarity with the dead and Resurrection. The Otherness of Christ's face proclaims the disconcerting logic of how faithfulness to God is possible at the very moment of God-forsakenness.

Furthermore, reflecting on the Risen Christ's Otherness extends the range of possibilities in von Balthasar's statement, "What God's glory in its good truth is, was to be revealed in Jesus Christ, and ultimately in his absolute obedience of Cross and Hell".[37] Just as Christ revealed the good truth of his Trinitarian communality on the Cross (whereby "the spirit unites Father and Son while stretching their mutual love to the point of unbearability"[38]), I want to show that he reveals it even to the dead. And I will argue that it is only in the light of the Resurrection the dramatic events of Holy Saturday are comprehensible. Hence, von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology of Holy Saturday and the Resurrection will be shown to provide fertile ground for a post-phenomenological development.

Holy Saturday and the Diastasis

To move von Balthasar's theology beyond the confines of ontology and phenomenology, let us now consider what amounts to a non-phenomenality of Christ's face. The triune events of Holy Saturday and the Resurrection can be best articulated through the language of ethical metaphysics. Let us begin with the Resurrection. For the disciples, it may seem that the post-Resurrection encounter occurs in a phenomenal way. But, there is a significant dimension of the encounter that they clearly could not sense, for how could they ever comprehend the glory of Christ's suffering in his going to the dead? Here lies the tension between Christ and the world. Whereas the world seeks to explain God's revelation by way of consciousness and the event of Being, the face of Christ signifies a place and time of ethical transcendence beyond objectivity, presence and

[37] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VI*, 242.

Being. But when the Risen Christ "appears" to the disciples, his face awakens in them an overwhelming desire for justice and love which cannot be reduced to consciousness.

We have spoken briefly of the effect of Christ's Otherness upon the disciples. But this must be set within the previous event of Holy Saturday. The character of this event, when Christ is dead among the dead, leads to a consideration of the diastasis existing between the Father and the Son, and how the Spirit bridges such a separation. Von Balthasar explains that the diastasis refers to "the infinite difference within God which is the presupposition of eternal love".[39] The diastasis is correlative to the *analogia entis* grounding the conciliar statement, "however great the similarity between creator and creature may be, the dissimilarity always nevertheless remains greater".[40] Such a statement is drawn from the difference within God, and between God and humanity as an essential condition for the opening out of eternal love. The difference bespeaks kenosis or otherness.[41] In the context of Holy Saturday, von Balthasar likens Christ's experience of Otherness to an experience of the horror of anonymous existence: "At this moment, the Word cannot hear itself. It collapses into its scream for the lost God".[42] Von Balthasar is suggesting that the experience of the Father's abandonment enables Christ to encounter the sinner who wants to be without God. Consequently, Christ is right for any sermon to the damned because he is abandoned by God like one of the dead.

Christ's descent to the dead, like his death on the Cross, in suffering the Father's abandonment, is beyond any phenomenal and ontological conception. It is not an experience; nor is it an ontological unveiling. It is an enigmatic and non-phenomenal encounter with the dead. Here, I am referring, it may be recalled, to Levinas' notions of encounter, passivity and otherness.[43] We wish to suggest, then, that Christ's encounter with the dead is a response of extreme passivity towards their state of God-forsakenness.

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[38] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Der dreifache Kranz. Das Heil der Welt im Mariengebet*, Third Edition, (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1978), 45, quoted in Kehl and r Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 149.
[39] von Balthasar, *Der dreifache Kranz*, 45, quoted in Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 113.
[40] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Klarstellungen. Zur Prüfung der Geister*, (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1978), 26, quoted in Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 182.
[41] Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 63-64.
[42] von Balthasar, *Der dreifache Kranz*, 65, quoted in Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 149.
[43] See Chapter Two, pp.36, 43, 46-50.

Accordingly, Christ responds by substituting for their hatred of God and their state of anonymous existence. The dead are given the possibility of being overwhelmed by the "impossibility" of triune love piercing the depths of hell. But Christ's descent to hell is not only a partaking of the depths of utter loneliness and despair, but also an offering of triune love for the damned. Christ's going to the dead shatters the totality of loneliness and despair for hell is now a place and time of Christ's alterity. This is to say that, for the dead, their relation with Christ can be interpreted as a traumatic encounter with his otherness, in a way that opens the possibility for them to be redeemed from their anonymous and depersonalised state.

The non-phenomenal idea of otherness contrasts with von Balthasar's use of the Thomistic categories of form and splendour as constituent factors of the beautiful in his theological aesthetics. For him, the phenomenality of form and splendour are the basis for an ontological unconcealment of God's glory. In contrast, if we emphasise the non-phenomenal sense of encounter and otherness, we have a more relational and less propositional understanding of Christ on Holy Saturday. Hence, rather than articulating Christ's meeting with the dead with ideas such as *form* or *splendour*, it would be more effective to speak of Christ in terms of encounter and otherness. Consequently, it is the encounter of Christ's Otherness, rather than the qualities of his Being and essence, should be of focal concern.

But here three questions arise as to the non-phenomenality of the diastasis on Holy Saturday:

1. How might the damned themselves distinguish between their own state of God-forsakenness and Christ himself who is now, like them, "debased to mere matter ... incapable of any active act of solidarity"?[44]
2. How possible is it for Christ, now "debased to mere matter" to "possess"[45] hell through an absolute passivity of solidarity with the damned?

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[44] von Balthasar, *Pneuma und Institution* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1974), 409, quoted in Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 153.
[45] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 233.

3. Could not Christ's descent to hell be understood not only soteriologically and eschatologically, but also equally in terms of God's act of creation [cf. Rom 8:22; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15]? I will now proceed to examine each question separately.

Finding Christ in God-forsakenness

The first question concerns the difficulty of identifying the depth of God in the God-forsakenness of the damned. For how can the dead ever distinguish between Christ's redeeming Otherness and his God-forsaken state. Von Balthasar explains that Christ's descent to the dead is an absolute passivity, an expiating substitution that "outlasts all the force of the pounding sin".[46] We find here a certain parallel with Levinas' notions of passivity, *illeity* and openness; and hence an opportunity to explicate how the dead might open to the depths of God's mercy despite their state of God-forsakenness.

Let us first look more carefully at Levinas' idea of passivity. This idea refers to the extreme exposure to the Other's destitution, that is, exposure to the activity of the "hither side".[47] The phrase signifies the site outside of Being and history in which the self's identity contracts to a point to which it is nakedly exposed to God's will. At this point the self transcends its consciousness to such a degree that the only response is expiation in a dimension of non-phenomenality.[48] Drawing on from this theme, I want to focus specifically on how the non-phenomenality of Christ's face affects the damned. Here, we must refer to the Levinasian idea of *illeity*, and its relevance to the non-phenomenality of the Holy Saturday.

Levinas stresses the idea of *illeity* as a trace and as the proximity of God in the face.[49] In the transcendence of the face, the trace produces an alterity that disturbs; it overwhelms consciousness.[50] In this regard, the proximity of God is neither a presence nor an ontological unveiling. In a Christian theological sense, we could conceive *illeity* as a trace of the Holy Spirit communicated through the face of Christ. In the context of Holy

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[46] Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 153.
[47] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 114. See also Chapter Two, p.45.
[48] See Chapter Two, pp.27, 29, 42, 47.
[49] See Chapter Two, pp. 37, 38, 49.

Saturday, the trace would signify that even if the dead are God-forsaken, a sense of the Father's love is still possible, not only for Christ, but also for the dead. The Holy Spirit inspires the possibility for redemption. In a complementary fashion, we could conceive that the Holy Spirit mediated through the face of Christ communicated the will of the Father as demanding that Christ take upon himself an infinite responsibility for human hatred of God. Even though Christ and the dead are abandoned by the Father, a sense of God's transcendence is possible through the trace of the Holy Spirit. Hence, such an encounter signifies that despite the diastasis between the Father and Son, there is still an opening for God's eternal love to penetrate the absolute loneliness of the damned.

In short, the diastasis provides the conditions of possibility for Christ going to the dead, even to offer a sense of the Father's love. Moreover, it makes possible for the damned to distinguish between Christ's solidarity as a forsaken one on the one hand, and his love on the other. Christ expiates for their state of lostness and God-forsakenness through the trace of the Holy Spirit in him. The difference between Christ and the Father thus creates space for Christ's kenotic Otherness to respond to the dead by disturbing their hatred of God and by shattering their absolute loneliness. Now, having set out to examine how the dead might find Christ in their state of God-forsakenness, we are in a position to respond to the second question concerning Christ's possession of hell in order to argue for a non-phenomenal conception of the diastasis on Holy Saturday.

Christ's Possession of Hell

Von Balthasar states that hell is "a christological concept".[51] He writes:

> In various ways, it [hell] is a christological concept; first, inasmuch as only the dead redeemer, by virtue of his kenosis, has experienced the full seriousness of what Sheol must be; second, inasmuch – again by virtue of his kenosis – as his abandonment to death by the Father was a unique abandonment that was determined within the Trinity; third, inasmuch as in this *visio (secundae) mortis* the whole fruit of the redeeming Cross was seen together.[52]

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[50] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Writings*, 68, 106-107, 136 and Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57.
[51] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 233.
[52] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 233.

The passage provides three reasons why Hell is a Christological concept. First, Christ's possession of hell depends on having experienced its totality of hate, lostness and sin. Second, Christ's experience of abandonment is determined within the Trinity. Third, Christ's descent to hell is an experience of the *visio mortis*, that is, the experience of sin as such.[53] The experience linking the events of the Cross, the Son's descent to the dead, and the Father's will, amounts to the kenosis of Christ. Since his theology of hell is a Christological position, von Balthasar limits himself to ontological thematisations of Christ's experience of kenosis and abandonment by the Father. However, a post-phenomenological approach would raise further questions as to the link between hell and Christology. Christ's kenosis and his abandonment articulated in terms of ontological language places more emphasis on Christ's experience of Hell rather than on him as a divine Person who has been given infinite responsibility for the dead. Christ's encounter with the dead is of greater significance than can be expressed by speaking of hell as a Christological "concept". In other words, the kenotic otherness of Christ rather than statements concerning Christ's "experience" of otherness should be the preferred basis of theology.

Von Balthasar's conception of the Christ's abandonment and death is related to the objective evidence of revelation. The evidence is objective in that revelation is unveiled through consciousness. God as the ultimate source of Christ's Being and kenosis is present or re-presented in consciousness. In contrast to this, an ethical metaphysical approach would signify Christ's kenotic abandonment to death not as presence, but in the place and time of transcendence, namely in the Trinitarian events of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery. Consequently, revelation is not a synchronic presence,[54] but is encountered through passivity to the depths of the Holy Spirit in Christ's face as it mediates the Father's love.

Furthermore in the above-cited passage, von Balthasar speaks of hell as "a second death in which the whole fruit of the redeeming Cross was seen together". The emphasis on

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[53] See also von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 172-173.
[54] See Chapter Two, p.33.

seeing is significant in that it implies that Hell is regarded as an objective and phenomenal experience. For Christ to have seen the chaotic reality of sin is also to have seen the dead, who wish to remain God-forsaken. That would imply that Christ was then in a position objectively to judge their eschatological fate. In other words, Christ's possession of hell rests upon his objective experience of Hell's lostness in obedience to the Father's will. Christ's objective experience of seeing becomes, thereby, the basis for determining the meaning of his eschatological Being on Holy Saturday. The priority given to "seeing" in von Balthasar's theological aesthetics throws further light on this question.

Von Balthasar considers that, in regard to the senses, sight is privileged over hearing, particularly in the biblical perception of God. He assigns hearing to the imitative, earthly faith of the Old Testament, whilst seeing is related to the realised, archetypal faith of the New Testament. Despite this dichotomy between hearing and seeing, von Balthasar cautions, "... assignations have something precarious and inexact about them, and very often are made on the basis of theological prejudices,"[55] and further, "... even if sight is the chief sense and expresses man's innermost longing, nevertheless a living person is known primarily by his word".[56] Accordingly, von Balthasar refers "to the senses without distinction" where "the accent, naturally, falls on sight".[57] Hearing therefore complements seeing as a way of communicating humanity's innermost longing.

In regard to his examples of the objective events of God's will in the Paschal Mystery and the visions of the Old Testament and of Revelation, von Balthasar goes on to state that, "the accent always falls on what is being shown".[58] He recognises also that seeing, as the ability to interpret God's absolute love, depends on an absolute passive experience of being incorporated into the good truth of God's glory.[59] In contrast, Levinas' writings place priority on hearing the word of God in the Other's face - rather than seeing through

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[55] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 310.
[56] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 310.
[57] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 310.
[58] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 313.
[59] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 291.

the radiance of God's Being.[60] Levinas' idea of the Other's face signifies the non-phenomenal phenomenon in which the word of God (the trace of *illeity*) might be heard. I emphasise "might" as Levinas cautions that *illeity* can be confused with the stirrings of the *there is*.[61] Given this ambiguity, we cannot prove whether God's discourse has or has not been heard. Again, Levinas warns of the dangers of trying to thematise God's divinity as a presence in consciousness.[62]

Our philosopher places a great amount of emphasis on the face as the locus in which God withdraws transcendence and leaves traces.[63] He describes the face as possessing the quality of an ambiguous unheard-of obligation that gives rise to the possibility of ethics. In another sense, the non-phenomenality of the face signifies the Saying, that is, the self's involvement with the Other.[64] He explains that the Saying transcends the noema of intentionality. As a result, a *noesis* or an act of consciousness is without an object, or *noema*. In the Saying, there occurs an exposure to an Other. The non-phenomenality of the Other's face is uncovered. Hence, the Saying provides the subject with a sense of transcendence or disinterestedness. It awakens in the subject the imperative to give, to suffer, and to live beyond the realm of ego-consciousness. Testimony and the Saying coincide.[65]

Levinas' ideas of hearing the word of God in the Other's face, the signification of the Saying and the idea of testimony[66] provide an alternative perspective to von Balthasar's understanding of hell as a Christological concept. Where von Balthasar emphasises Christ experiencing and seeing the full seriousness of hell (or Sheol), a Levinasian perspective would place an accent on Christ hearing the Father's word of salvation through the Spirit, by exposing himself to the outrage, insults and wounds of the damned. Such hearing would entail an extreme or hyperbolic passivity. For, in solidarity with the damned, Christ makes himself utterly available to them in their state of perdition. His

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[60] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 110.
[61] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.
[62] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.
[63] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 107.
[64] See Chapter Two, pp.36-37.
[65] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 149.

existence is sacrificial. Exposed to the pain of suffering and trauma beyond any possibility of representation, Christ offers the grace of salvation to the dead. Here, I want to argue that Christ's responsibility for the dead derives precisely from his relation with the unthematisable will of the Father. It is neither a subjective experience nor an objective proof of it.

Moreover, Christ's kenotic obedience to the Father's will is the radical explanation of the manner in which Christ encounters the pure state of sin. For, after hearing the Father's word of salvation, Christ is the Word that penetrates all hatred and lostness in the damned. He thereby goes down to hell in such a way that he can truly testify to the Father's reconciling love through his experience of God-forsakenness. The Son's testimony occurs beyond any representation, perception, or phenomenon. Christ's witness follows from the unique mission he has received from the Father to enter what is further from him, namely to be one, through the excess of love, with the lost and damned. Let us now turn to the third and final question of the relation between Christ's descent to hell and God's act of creation.

The Mystery of Creation

The possibility of salvation for the dead suggests an "unfinished" aspect of the mystery of Creation. Von Balthasar reflects on this resistance and incompleteness when he writes:

> ... sin in its 'pure state' separated from man, 'sin in itself' in the whole formless, chaotic momentum of its reality, was seen by Jesus; and with it, the 'remainder' that could not be absorbed into the Father's work of creation, because he had left man freedom to decide for or against God – the unfinished part of the creation, that it was left to the incarnate Son to finish; and the Son, obedient to his mission, is led by the Father now into the state of existence of this sin that 'remains'.[67]

The ontological foundation that sustains von Balthasar's theology of Creation and of sin is the analogy of Being. It is employed to safeguard the divine transcendence over the finite world. But, for von Balthasar, Christ, being the archetype of the analogy of Being, is the channel *par excellence* to God's gift of salvation. Analogy is the ontological form

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[66] See Chapter Two, pp.36-37, 41, 56.

of reason that aims to elucidate the likeness and image of God in the creature, and the relationship to God.[68] However, from a Levinasian point of view, any analogical expression of God works necessarily by way of presence, objectivity and Being. In Levinas' thought, there is no place for that activity of thanking-thinking that von Balthasar takes from Heidegger. Any analogical and theological thematisation of God would subject the divine to the self's experience and logic. In the context of Holy Saturday, the Levinasian notion of individuation rather than the ontological form of analogy, lead to a deeper insight into the mystery of Creation.

We recall that, for Levinas, "individuation" refers to the identity of the self occurring by being torn inside out to the point of expiation for an Other.[69] An extreme form of substitution, expiation "super-individuates" the self by confronting it with alterity. Levinas also describes expiation as the overemphasis of openness.[70] Individuation signifies that the force of alterity has broken the limits of one's identity and transformed it into an obsessive relationship of existing through and for the Other. Hence, the self's identity is inverted from Being to Otherwise than Being; it is a radical turnabout from being for oneself to substituting for others.[71] In this understanding of individuation, the self's ethical transformation surpasses any attempt of ontological or analogical thematisation. In this regard, the self is now located beyond the limits of identity. We thus return to the idea of extreme passivity, a state that cannot be contained by phenomenal consciousness. In this site of transcendence, the self cannot compare or reduce the Other or God to a presence within consciousness through analogical logic. When the self is freed from being in-itself and for-itself, it exists as responsible for others.

In the context of Creation and Holy Saturday, the idea of individuation, rather than any analogical thinking, leads to a deeper notion of theological alterity, for it bears on the extent to which Christ completes the "unfinished" dimension of creation. In this Levinasian perspective, the process of Christ's individuation is one of going beyond the limits of his identity by expiating for the damned. As a result, the possibility for Christ

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[67] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 233.
[68] See Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 54-57.
[69] See Chapter Two, p.47.
[70] See Chapter Two, p.47.

completing what could not be absorbed into the Father's work of Creation is suggested. Because Christ is led by the Father to take on the state of anonymous and depersonalised existence, "the deepest silence of death".[72]

The idea of individuation is not entirely foreign for von Balthasar. Making reference to it in the context of Holy Saturday, he writes:

> And yet this extremity of 'weakness' certainly can and must be one with the object of his vision: the second death which, itself, is one with sheer sin as such, no longer sin as attaching to a particular human being, sin incarnate in living existences, but abstracted from that individuation, contemplated in its bare reality as such (for sin *is* a reality!).[73]

Von Balthasar addresses the possibility for Christ of contemplating the sheer reality of sin. This possibility abstracts the experience of sin as such from the human person's individuation in a sinful state of life. The abstraction is "the product" [74] of Christ's active and subjective experience of suffering on the Cross, and not however Christ's own individuation in hell. Although von Balthasar speaks of Christ's contemplation of sin as such as a second death, it would seem that he fails to speak of Christ's own individuation and even the Spirit's role in it. The idea of a second death, namely the experience of God-forsakenness in hell, bears, therefore, some similarity with the idea of individuation, even if von Balthasar does not make this very explicit.

In the interests of greater explicitness in this regard, I would suggest that Christ's individuation signifies the possibility on the part of the damned to identify with Christ's pure suffering and kenosis. Christ's individuation testifies to the Father of his solidarity with the damned to the point of being infinitely responsible for their sin. Despite the unbridgeable difference between the dead and God, Christ's non-indifference to such difference extends to the point of substituting himself for the dead. In this, Christ witnesses to the depths of Trinitarian love. By developing von Balthasar's thought we

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[71] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 117-118.
[72] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 234.
[73] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 173.
[74] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 173.

come to the point of understanding Christ's experience of hell in such way that he now has the power "to dispose, as judge, the everlasting salvation or the everlasting loss of man".[75] As a result, the dead will encounter in Christ God's judgment and mercy beyond the limits of any understanding and thematisation. It is left then to the action of the Holy Spirit to stretch the mutual love between the Father and the Son to the point of unbearability while at the same time uniting their love. This provides another opportunity to look at Christ's individuation in a context that will speak of the Spirit's uniting love over against the diastasis on Holy Saturday.

The Action of the Spirit

Von Balthasar is comparatively reticent on the subject of the Spirit's action in his account of the mystery of Holy Saturday. His silence on this matter is surprising, especially given his description of the Spirit's central place as the mutual love between the Son and the Father.[76] We can argue, then, that Hell is both a Christological and a pneumatic concept. When von Balthasar speaks of Christ's doing "the living will of the Father,"[77] a non-phenomenal view of the Spirit's action in Christ during Holy Saturday can provide a corrective and an enrichment. Take the following statement:

> Yet this act of seizing fate and destiny, and wrenching them out of their axes, takes place in the deepest silence of death. The Word of God has become unheard, and no message forces its way upwards to speak of its journey through the darkness: for it can do this only as not-word, as not-form, through a not-land, behind a sealed stone. And this 'doing' itself is no longer active, but is only something that is done.[78]

At this important juncture, von Balthasar does not speak of the Spirit's action on Holy Saturday. This points to a gap in his theological aesthetics.[79] Nevertheless, von Balthasar speaks of hell as "the deepest silence of death" and of Christ's "doing" as more a passivity (something "no longer active") and as an effaced trace (as "not-word, as not-form, through a not-land, behind a sealed stone"). Let us take these ideas further. In an

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[75] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 177.
[76] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 262-263.
[77] von Balthasar, *Pneuma und Institution*, 55, quoted in Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 177.
[78] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 234.

ethical-metaphysical sense, we might imagine that the Holy Spirit uses such silence to communicate not only the Father's will to Christ, but also Christ's absolute passivity in relation to the dead. This "deepest silence of death" appears as the impossibility of leaving the dead to their lostness and God-forsakenness. If hell is the place of "deepest silence", of the impossibility of Christ's abandoning the dead, hell must also be a place that defies the notion of presence (cf. "not-form", "not-land") and of what might be said (cf. "unheard", "not-word").

On the other hand, von Balthasar's theological aesthetics remains for the most part within the ambit of phenomenology and ontology. To this degree, it is limited in its articulation of the non-phenomenal realm of Holy Saturday. He does ask whether it is theologically possible to understand Christ's supreme solitude with the dead in the light of the Catholic tradition that, "On Holy Saturday the Church is invited rather to follow at a distance".[80] Can we go further on this point, in reference to the ethical-metaphysical idea of glory? It witnesses to the Infinite beyond Being, and beyond one's own death. In this Levinasian perspective, the manner in which the Spirit inspires the Son's individuation through conformity to the Father's will is more adequately clarified.

I have argued that the locus of the Father's will in hell is found in the non-phenomenality of Christ's face. Further, I have spoken of how the Son's individuation testifies to the non-phenomenal trace of the Father's will. In other words, the individuation of the Son depends on the role of the Spirit to unite the absolute passivity of his action with the Father's will. Here, the Levinasian idea of glory,[81] can deepen the understanding of the Spirit's role in Christ's individuation. Levinas speaks of glory as the very communication of the face of the Other that designates a unique and chosen responsibility beyond Being and death (i.e. beyond the ontological perseverance of being-towards-death).[82] With such an understanding of glory, it is possible to conceive of the individuation of Christ in the depths of the dead, as he is inspired by the Spirit to give

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[79] See for example von Balthasar's exposition of Hell in *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 228-235, containing no explicit reference to the Holy Spirit.
[80] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 181.
[81] See Chapter Two, pp.36, 41, 48.

himself in glorification of the Father. This implies that the Spirit interrupts Christ's state of God-forsakenness with the dead, so that he is designated by the Spirit for a unique and chosen responsibility beyond his state of lostness and abandonment and rejection of God, as one dead among the dead.

So far I have tried to bring out the importance of not only the encounter between the dead and Christ's Otherness, but also the influence of the Spirit in Christ's individuation as a salvific presence in hell. It follows that Holy Saturday is not an event of Being, but an encounter between Christ and the dead. In that encounter, the lostness and totality of hell is suspended by Christ's expiation for the dead, for the non-phenomenality of Christ's face signifies the offer of salvation. Through the action of the Spirit, Christ assumes the responsibility that has been determined from time immemorial. Preceding any possibility of Christ explaining his identity as the Word of the Father is his responsibility for the dead in obedience to an unrepresentable command to expiate for the lost. In a Levinasian perspective, there occurs an inversion of the order of revelation, as the one who receives the revelation makes the revelation.[83]

In our effort to explore the non-phenomenality of Holy Saturday, we have suggested that, through the inspiration of the Spirit, Christ attains a state of absolute passivity and individuation as an offer of salvation to the damned. The revelation at stake is at once the Word of the Father and the impossibility of such a Word to be reduced to ego-consciousness (a not-word and not-form). Hence, Christ's disinterestedness, under the action of the Holy Spirit, enables Christ to reveal God without any prior thematisation of the divinity of God. In other words, Christ's individuation in the Spirit is the site of alterity in which the dead might have a sense of the Father's word of salvation. I have been arguing that the role of the Spirit on Holy Saturday does not receive enough attention in von Balthasar's Christocentric and theocentric (Trinitarian) theological aesthetics. But by making use of Levinas' ethical metaphysics, I have characterised the Spirit as an unrepresentable trace in the face of Christ. We can thus conceive of the

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[82] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 147.
[83] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 156.

Father's word of salvation beyond objectivity, presence and Being. In this, the Spirit enables Christ to do the Father's will in the site of alterity, that is, through passivity and expiation. The Spirit thereby is the bond of mutual love dwelling in Christ and the Father as the Son bears the weight of sin through a unique substitution.

I wish to stress another point. The action of the Spirit on Holy Saturday signifies the impossibility for Christ of evading the non-phenomenal faces of the damned without bearing the weight of their sins. Hence, Christ's absolute passivity in taking on the full seriousness of God-forsakenness turns into expiation. The Spirit of love uniting Christ and the Father cannot be conceived adequately in the categories of objectivity, presence and Being, for the identity of this Holy Spirit is beyond all conceptualisation. Moreover, given the Levinasian idea of God's proximity,[84] could we not conceive that the place and time of the Spirit in the Trinitarian and salvific event of Holy Saturday is found in the impossibility of Christ of evading the Father's will. This impossibility is related to the Spirit's infinite passion for responsibility. Through the Spirit, Christ's expiatory self-offering and his obedience to the Father's will are the same, as the Father's glory shines on the face of Risen Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

Let us now proceed to a non-phenomenal study of the Resurrection. For von Balthasar, it is the event in which the true significance of Holy Saturday is revealed.[85]

The Resurrection of the Son

In regard to the historical context of the Resurrection, von Balthasar describes the way G. Koch compares the mutual encounter between God and humanity to a lived experience (*Erlebnis*) in the Husserlian sense. He writes:

> Resurrection does not lie beyond history; one cannot, therefore, speak of an 'historical pole' in the event. Rather is 'Jesus risen into history'. In that event, God acquires a definitive *figure* in which he appears to men, but this figure consists in the indissoluble reciprocal relationship which joins the God who gives himself in Christ to man who receives that gift, and entrusts himself to it. This is

[84] See Chapter Two, p.42.
[85] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 189.

> an originating relationship (like the *noēma* and *noēsis* of Husserl), existing only as personally actualised, which means to say in mutual encounter.[86]

Von Balthasar questions Koch's identification of the Resurrection with appearance in the sense that that "Jesus has risen into history". In spite of this, he nevertheless admits that it, "could express the right understanding, namely the direct presentation of the new aeon embodied in Christ to those who still abide on mortality".[87] Even though von Balthasar is aware of the problem of appearance,[88] his writings show evidence of the analogy of apperception. For example, describing the finite character of human knowing he writes, "... human knowledge is always a unity of analysis and synthesis".[89] This is an important indication for the need of his theology to be developed through the language of alterity.

In the introduction, I indicated how von Balthasar emphasises the sense of experience as *Erfahren* rather than *Erlebnis*. None the less, his idea of perception suggests the necessity of some level of lived experience. His phenomenology seems to rely on the unification of *noesis* with *noema*. In Husserlian usage, the term *noesis* refers to the act of consciousness itself, while *noema* refers to the perception of the object. For him, transcendental consciousness is thus a unity of apperception between the *noesis* and *noema*.[90] With this in mind, we could suggest that von Balthasar is in fact closer to the way Koch likens God's originating relationship with humanity in the Resurrection to the complex notion of a *noesis* of a *noema*.

Von Balthasar's idea of "the direct presentation of the new aeon embodied in Christ" is clearly a feature of faith-inspired mode of understanding. Yet despite his recognition of

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[86] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 216.
[87] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 229.
[88] Responding to the problem of identifying appearance with the Resurrection, von Balthasar writes: "That this figure will then have to be 'reproduced' for the purposes of communication makes it already questionable, since in Jesus it is God himself who appears in all his livingness, and yet, at the same time, in a normative form –and who would claim to be able to copy that, when even among men significant gestures only preserve their meaning insofar as they possess a transparency for the partners to the encounter, as the latter exteriorise themselves and bestow themselves on each other, or refuse to make that act of bestowal?" See von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 216.
[89] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 253.
[90] For a helpful description of Husserl's understanding of the noesis and noema, see Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, 22-23.

the role of the Spirit, knowledge of God must come by way of consciousness. In this regard, the aesthetic experience is *par excellence* the way in to contemplate knowledge of God: "The aesthetic experience is the union of the greatest possible concreteness of the individual form and the greatest possible universality of its meaning or of the epiphany within it of the mystery of Being".[91] Granted that he presupposes a loving renunciation before God, God nevertheless is objectified and presented to consciousness within the mystery of Being. Hence, at least there must be some level of representation. We could argue, therefore, that faith's consciousness of the Risen Christ (*noesis*) results in the evidence of revelation, as God acquires a definitive figure in which to appear to humanity (*noema*). The question remains as to what level of representation is envisaged in this theological approach. A partial representation is implied in his emphasis on the incompleteness of our knowledge of God and, indeed, of anything.[92] Still, there must be some correspondence between the *noesis* (the *cogitatio*) and the *noema* (the *cogitatum*). However, even after a thing has been apprehended, the full extent of its ontological mystery remains. In this case, the *noesis* no longer is on the scale of its *noema*. But from a Levinasian point of view, even a *noesis*, such as the thought of the mystery of God, is ultimately beyond apprehension, it is nevertheless contaminated by the category of Being. Let us examine more closely von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology of the Resurrection from a Levinasian perspective.

Levinas' non-phenomenology is another avenue for approaching the drama of Jesus risen into history, as it looks beyond the noetic-noematical structure of consciousness. After all, the Risen Christ's appearing is not an isolated instant in history. It is the culmination of God's self-revelation through time, and beyond, even to the depths of hell. The Resurrection is not just a phenomenal encounter. It has a non-phenomenal quality in that it holds within it the trace of Holy Saturday. The Otherness of the Risen Christ's encounter with the disciples demands a language of alterity if understanding is to escape from the site of ontology.

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[91] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 234.
[92] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 248-253.

Alterity and Theology

Levinas' language of alterity is a characterised by an interrelation of complex terms and ideas. One example is found in his analysis of desire. The term speaks of the affect of otherness, giving rise to a life of ethical transcendence. Levinas states:

> Desire, or the response to an enigma, or morality, is a plot with three personages: the I approaches the infinite by going generously toward the you, who is still my contemporary, but, in the trace of illeity, presents himself out of a depth of the past, faces, and approaches me. I approach the infinite insofar as I forget myself for my neighbour who looks at me; I forget myself only in breaking the undephaseable simultaneity of representation, in existing beyond my death. I approach the infinite by sacrificing myself. Sacrifice is the norm and the criterion of the approach. And the truth of transcendence consists in the concording of speech with acts.[93]

We find firstly an idea of desire as the response to an enigma.[94] It speaks of moral responsibility beyond the possibility of representation. The enigma refers also to transcendence itself in the sense of the trace of *illeity* or the proximity of the Other as Other.[95] This suggests that the enigma or trace of God's proximity disturbs phenomena in such a way by preventing any meaning to be represented. Desire is therefore a response interrupting the phenomenal world and its futile search for the truth of Being. In the passage just cited, Levinas presents desire as a triadic plot between the personages of the I, the Infinite[96] and the You. He explains that the trace of *illeity* is the site of ethical transcendence for the You (the neighbour) to approach the I (the Self). But the idea of the trace of *illeity* is obviously complex. Levinas has referred to it as "the *he* in the depth of the you".[97] In my reading, "the depth of the you" signifies an immemorial past in which the Word of God has already ordered the self to be responsible. Hence, unless the I hearkens to the trace of *illeity* (that is hears the word of God in the face of the Other), no approach to the Infinite is possible for it has already withdrawn.

Levinas supposes that the I must approach the Infinite by going generously towards the You. We can suggest that the I's approach refers to the I's act of sacrifice by way of

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[93] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 72.
[94] See Chapter Two, p.41.
[95] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 74.
[96] See Chapter Two, p.39.

responsibility for the Other. In other words, the I's approach signifies transcendence beyond self-consciousness, in a transcendence in which the logos (discourse) concords with acts. Levinas' concept of desire for the neighbour amounts to a non-phenomenal triadic relation of the I, the Infinite and the You. With this in mind, we turn to the transcendent and non-phenomenal relation of the disciples to the Risen Christ. The language of alterity can help in overcoming von Balthasar's tendency to reduce the Risen Christ to a transcendental object in the Husserlian sense.

Furthermore, the erotic and evocative images in Levinas' non-phenomenality of the face (Cf. His treatment of desire, having the other in one's skin, "I am an other", exposing oneself, passion and "is close to me")[98] are not conceived with aesthetics in mind. Paradoxically, such images serve to emphasise the self's responsibility for the Other as the non-erotic par excellence.[99] Such a notion challenges the whole methodological structure of von Balthasar's trilogy, beginning as it does with theological aesthetics. Accordingly, we want to challenge von Balthasar's preference for the beautiful by giving a priority to the Good. Von Balthasar's aestheticisation of consciousness needs, in this respect, to learn the language of alterity.

Against this background, we can now focus on the non-phenomenality of the Resurrection in the specific context of von Balthasar's theological aesthetics. His reflection of the disciples' encounter with the Risen Christ in Jn 20:19-23 provides a context to theologise with the language of alterity.[100] I hope to show that the Risen Christ's Otherness provides a foundation for a non-analogical language regarding the beautiful, the good, the true and glory. Our next section will give an ethical metaphysical reading of Jn 20:19-23.

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[97] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165.
[98] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 118; Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 60; Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 95; and Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 143.
[99] These findings have been published in my article, "'God writes straight with crooked lines': Eros, agape and the witness of glory. An encounter between the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and feminist liberation theology," *Colloquium* 33:1 (May, 2001), 23-37.
[100] The results of this finding has been published in my article, "The Triune Drama of the Resurrection Via Levinas' Non-phenomenology," *Sophia* 42:2, 79-97.

A Study of John 20:19-23

Jn 20:19-23 follows on Jesus' self-disclosure to Mary Magdalene and her announcement to the disciples of what she has seen and heard. The passage reads as follows:

> When it was even on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sin of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Commenting on this passage, von Balthasar explains the sending as, "an existential participation in Jesus' self-abandonment, in which the Holy Spirit 'blows' (Jn 3:8) or is (Jn 7:39)".[101] The participation is connected with a sacramental experience of eucharist and reconciliation. In this, the reality of the Risen Christ surpasses that of a mediator because his identity is the eucharist, the forgiveness of sins in the condition of self-abandonment. The Holy Spirit "blows or is" in Jesus' eucharistic identity, enabling the disciples to receive the Easter gift of the power to forgive sins.[102] It follows that Christ is accessible in his sacramentally objective mode, while the Holy Spirit is an object of knowledge and experience within such a mode of objectivity.

As mentioned already, much of von Balthasar's presentation of Christ - from the Incarnation through to the Resurrection – is structured by his use of analogy of Being and the transcendentals. Here, I limit my attention to the analogy of the transcendentals and reserve a consideration of the analogy of Being until Chapter Five. Reflecting on the analogy of the transcendentals, von Balthasar writes:

> God does not come primarily as a teacher for us ('true'), as a 'redeemer' for us (good), but to display and to radiate himself, the splendour of his eternal triune love in that 'disinterestedness' that true love has in common with true beauty'. For the glory of God the world was created through it and for its sake the world is also redeemed.[103]

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[101] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 151.
[102] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 151-152.
[103] von Balthasar, *My Work*, 80. See also Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 37.

Given von Balthasar's privileging of beauty and its associated disinterestedness, there is the possibility of thinking beyond and outside his phenomenal and ontological framework. In the passage just cited, he describes God objectively as a teacher, redeemer and one who "radiates himself". More generally, he speaks of God's Being as the interplay between beauty, goodness, truth and glory (*doxa*). In contrast to this, an ethical metaphysical conception of this interplay can be developed in a non-ontological sense. This amounts to giving priority to the good in an ethical metaphysical sense.

Levinas' has described desire as a plot with the three personages of the I, the You and the Infinite. It can prove helpful in treating the non-phenomenality of the Risen Christ - especially in the context of Jn 20:19-23. To take this further, I will first consider the non-phenomenality of the Risen Christ's face. Then it will be necessary to refer to four aspects of the trace of *illeity*, namely diachrony, the immemorial, effacement and ambiguity. Let us now take up the first point.

The non-phenomenality of Christ's Face

In the resurrection narrative, the disciples are faced with the Otherness of the Risen Christ. Here, we keep in mind that Christ's Otherness in its fullest dimensions also signifies the Holy Spirit in the depth of the Risen One. In their approach to Christ in his risen appearance, the disciples are described by John as rejoicing when they see the Lord. We could imagine that the disciples rejoice or go generously towards the Risen Christ because they have been faced by him in a metaphysical sense. Their encounter with Christ (Jn 20) is beyond phenomenal experience, thus presuming an ontological unveiling of truth. At this point the question arises as to how the disciples might express the Risen Christ's Otherness? The resolution of such a quandary lies in their sacrificial action in their desire to participate in Christ's self-abandonment. In other words, the Otherness or the non-phenomenality of Christ's face commands the disciples to exist beyond their death like the Risen Christ himself. Thus summoned with a morality of "being otherwise" than existing in the limits imposed by their own death, the disciples have the possibility of thinking of what had been closed to them, namely the incomprehensibility of Christ's abandonment to the Father's will. Their experience and thought demands a

language of alterity by which to express the desire to participate in Jesus' self-abandonment through the Spirit to the Father.

We must go further in this consideration of the non-phenomenality of the Resurrection, as we pick up again on the notion of desire. The disciple's desire for Christ unfolds as a plot of individuation and expiation as identity and alterity are united. Like Christ's individuation on Holy Saturday, the disciples' individuation depends on the non-phenomenality of an encounter. We recall that the idea of non-phenomenality is important because it makes space for the word "God" to be pronounced. Levinas states: "The direct encounter with God, *this* is a Christian concept. As Jews, we are always a threesome: I and you and the Third who is in our midst. And only as a Third does He reveal Himself".[104] The idea of "the Third"[105] speaks of the trace of *illeity* and of a triadic structure between the I, the Other and God. In such a Levinasian frame of reference, we can conceive of the Resurrection from a different angle. Even though the disciples are face to face with Christ, it is the non-phenomenal aspect of the encounter that is more significant, as can be indicated in reference to the trace of *illeity* and its bearing on the Otherness of the Risen Christ.

The Trace of Illeity

This second aspect of the Risen Christ's Otherness requires more space. The disciples cannot make an authentically individuative response until Christ breathes the Spirit upon them. Before receiving the Spirit, they are in a state of confusion, Luke's Gospel describes, "They were startled and terrified, and thought they were seeing a ghost" (Luke 24:37). With this in mind, let us consider how Levinas distinguishes *illeity* from the *there is*, the better to explicate the Otherness that the Gospel witnesses to. He writes:

> Ethics is not a moment of being; it is otherwise and better than being, the very possibility of the beyond. In this ethical reversal, in this reference of the desirable to the non-desirable, in this strange mission that orders the approach to the other, God is drawn out of objectivity, presence and being. He is neither an object nor an interlocutor. His absolute remoteness, his transcendence, turns into my responsibility

[104] Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, 247.
[105] See Chapter Two, pp.57-58.

> – non-erotic par excellence – for the other. And this analysis implies that God is not simply the "first other," the "other par excellence," or the "absolutely other," but other than the other [*autre qu'autrui*], other otherwise, other with an alterity of the other, prior to the ethical bond with another and different from every neighbour, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of possible confusion with the stirring of the *there is*.[106]

Levinas states that for God to be drawn out of objectivity, presence and Being, ethics must be conceived as the very possibility of the beyond. The ethical metaphysical idea of God is otherwise and better than Being. God can only be truly meant in reference to the neighbour's proximity and the self's responsibility for this Other. God's transcendence is an ethical signification of what is beyond Being. Furthermore the trace of God in the Other's face is described in four ways[107]:

- diachronic ("other with an alterity of the other");
- immemorial ("prior to the ethical bond");
- effaced ("transcendent to the point of absence"); and
- ambiguous ("to the point of possible confusion with the stirring of the *there is*").

These four aspects of *illeity* (otherness) assist a theological interpretation of Christ's Otherness as recounted in Jn 20:19-23. In other words, the event of the Resurrection evokes diachronic, immemorial, effaced and ambiguous aspects of God. This is to argue that the approach inspires the disciples to exist in Christ's victory over the power of death. This conquering of death speaks of substitution to the point of expiation rather than the *conatus* of Being.

There is diachronic aspect: it approaches God only by way of participation in Jesus' self-surrender. The influence of the Resurrection is immemorial because the disciples have been called by Christ who in turn has been called by the Father before the time of creation to do his will. It leads to effacement because in the presence of Christ a greater absence is signified in the objective world. Lastly, the Resurrection works with a certain ambiguity, in a Levinasian sense, allowing for the possible confusion of *illeity* and the

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[106] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165-166.
[107] See Chapter Two, pp.32-34.

there is. Like the stirring of the *there is*, the trace of *illeity* disturbs the self when the neighbour approaches.

We have begun to present how the Spirit of the Risen Christ acts in ways that are diachronic, immemorial, effaced and ambiguous. Here we may insert Levinas' idea of the trace in a manner relevant to our interpretation of von Balthasar. The encounter with the Risen Christ resists what must be reduced to history and memory in the synchrony of time, for it also signifies Christ's Crucifixion and going to the dead on Holy Saturday. The trace of God that marks the Risen Christ, inspires in the disciples a sense of Christ's atonement for humanity. It overwhelms cognition. In other words, when the Risen Christ approaches the disciples, his Otherness signifies the trauma of being obedient to the Father's will: this is, an unimaginable encounter with the dead in hell. The disciples too must suffer the trauma of being under the obligation to live lives of substitution to the point of expiation. The Spirit which Christ gives, disturbs and opens the disciples' consciousness to the transcendence of Christ in regard to history. Only in the site of transcendence, in this horizon of openness, can they express the Word of God in their proclamation of God's Reign. Thus, the Otherness of the Risen Christ appears in a non-phenomenal sense, never representable to their consciousness, but rather signified in their responsibility to, and for, others.

To sum up: the Spirit of the Risen Christ inspires in the disciples a mission specified not only by Christ's Crucifixion, but also by his going to the dead. The disciples, like Christ, might be called to live a life of substitution to the point of expiation. A Levinasian "Otherness" helps to uncover what lies concealed in Jn 20:19-23.

It calls into question von Balthasar's interpretation of the passage referred to. For his part, von Balthasar acknowledges what cannot be fully grasped. He writes, "Like the Eucharist and all the sacraments, the Gospels conceal by revealing: how could it be otherwise, when God's humility, descending beneath all that may be uttered, can be fully grasped in no act of reverbalisation?"[108] Even though he here acknowledges that God is ultimately beyond language, he nevertheless speaks of God in what amounts to an

[108] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 157.

ontological "reverbalisation" of what has been revealed. In contrast to von Balthasar, we would argue for a hearing of the Gospel's enigmatic language through the language of alterity.

For this purpose, I will firstly examine von Balthasar's understanding of the transcendentals. After that, I will focus more precisely on the ideas of diachrony, the immemorial, effacement and ambiguity as they relate to Christ' Otherness in the resurrection narrative.

The Transcendentals

Von Balthasar's theological aesthetics focus on the form and beauty of God's glory. What he describes and explains has an ontological and phenomenological structure. His aesthetics and, indeed, his whole trilogy uses the analogy of the transcendentals as the lens by which the qualities of God's Being might be experienced. Let us look more closely at the way von Balthasar makes use of the analogy of the transcendentals in his theology. In the following example, he argues that the theological *transcendentale* of glory is in an indissoluble perichoresis with the philosophical *transcendentalia* of the one, the beautiful, the good and the true:

> In so far as *doxa* is a theological *transcendentale*, it necessarily has something in common with the philosophical *transcendentalia* of being (the one, the true, the good, the beautiful): namely, that it exists in an indissoluble perichoresis with these, such that everything that is theologically true is also good and glorious, and everything that is glorious is so to the extent that it is also good and true; for God himself is the original One, and all his self-manifestations bear the seal of this unity. Therefore too all dogmas are only aspects of the one, indivisible, good and beautiful truth of God.[109]

The passage explains the existence of the transcendentals in God on the basis of the analogy between God and statements about God (dogmas). In other words, the analogy of Being is the underlying foundation for the analogy of the transcendentals. Von Balthasar emphasises that the philosophical transcendentals are properties of God's Being of glory by speaking of *perichoresis*. This manner of speaking follows from the purpose

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[109] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242-3.

of theological aesthetics, namely to articulate the qualities of God's Being as dogma in the hope that these qualities can be incorporated into Christian *praxis*.[110] However, in line with Levinas, we might presume to suggest a formulation that is "otherwise than Being".

Inasmuch as von Balthasar understands *doxa* to be a theological transcendental quality of God's Being, he must admit that such understanding depends on an ontological unveiling. For him, glory is the Lord's intrusion upon consciousness.[111] In Scola's reading of this matter, he notes,

for example, when God's Being is perceived as a formal object, the thematisation of the object of consciousness as the beautiful means to be dominated by God's glory (*doxa*).[112] This is to say that God's glory becomes a manifestation in consciousness intent on explanation and proofs of the qualities of God's Being. In short, *theoria* precedes *praxis*.

Still, von Balthasar's intention is always to protect the reality of divine transcendence. For that reason he employs the various types of analogy. On the other hand, he appears to limit the conception of God to the transcendental properties of Being. This analogical position is grounded in a "renewed phenomenology" by which to gaze upon God's glory through representations accessible to the eyes of faith.[113] A counterposition to both von Balthasar's ontology and phenomenology can be developed by way of Levinasian ethical transcendence and sense of Otherness. I hope to show that which will throw light on the unique character of the Otherness of the Risen Lord – in a manner that evades the constraints of Being and phenomenal experience. Specifically, I want to show how the four aspects of the Levinasian idea of the trace of *illeity* (diachrony, immemorial past, effacing and ambiguity) can replace the analogy of the transcendentals in referring to the Risen Christ.

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[110] See Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 36-38.
[111] Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 99.
[112] See Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 2.
[113] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 32-33.

Diachrony and Immemorial Time

For von Balthasar, the Resurrection, like the death and burial, is "a historically determined event".[114] Furthermore, the idea that Jesus has risen into history amounts to a disclosure of God's Being as love, that is, "the direct presentation of the new eon embodied in Christ".[115] Yet, we are faced with an ambiguity of what remains beyond representation in historical time, as when Christ rises "into history" after his death on the Cross. At this juncture, the Levinasian idea of the trace of *illeity* can be pressed into service. First, let us examine of the diachronic aspect of the trace and its relevance to a theology of the Resurrection. The event of Resurrection is, in some obvious sense, an interruption of historical time; it disturbs synchronic time with an unthematisable deed and Word of God. The "appointed time", the *kairos*, of Jesus' rising into history is not measurable by quantitative "clock time". It introduces a qualitative change in time as it summons to a new sense of time as awakening to responsibility to the Other in the light of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery. The diachronic time of Christ's encounter with the disciples makes up the concreteness of the Resurrection event. It is an encounter outside the disciples' capacity to measure or reduce the appearance of the Risen Christ to an act of their transcendental consciousness. In place of an all-reductive subjectivity, the disciples are overwhelmed by a time-transforming Otherness. Through the gift of Holy Spirit, time is torn away from its moorings in the structure of self-sufficiency, to be drawn into a new time of responsibility. In this state of deep passivity, in the all-summoning proximity of the Other, the disciples are taken out of themselves, and so disposed to be possessed by the Spirit of Christ.

Hence, the diachrony in the Resurrection event prohibits the disciples trying to grasp Christ's Resurrection as an ontological unveiling or as a synchronic experience. For the objectivity or Otherness of the Resurrection is not related to the disciples' transcendental ego, as though Christ were an empirical object or intuited essence. Levinas' understanding of diachrony permits viewing the Resurrection, not as a phenomenal appearance in synchronic time, but more through a pure passivity to the Other who comes

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[114] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 242.
[115] von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 216, 229.

from beyond the frame of any presence. In this way, Christ's Resurrection breaks open the disciples' consciousness and its thematising propensities. Christ's own state of absolute passivity is the mark of super-individuation effected through the Cross and Holy Saturday. He bears the trauma of the wounds of his obedience to the Father. Having risen from the dead, Christ now faces the disciples in the Spirit of a new time, transcendence and responsibility.

Von Balthasar, however, limits his understanding of the non-phenomenality of the Resurrection. He expresses Jesus' Resurrection more in terms of the synchrony of Being rather than the diachrony of time. But the synchrony of Being works in reductive fashion, and constricts the full disclosure of truth. In ontological terms, the "truth" of Christ's Resurrection would be reduced to a thematisation or an objective proposition of experience.[116] In contrast, with a more diachronic inclusion of the Cross and Holy Saturday, the Risen Christ is in the non-obectifiable Other facing the disciples. He breathes on them the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22) and opens their minds to a diachronic understanding of the Scriptures in the light of what God has done and spoken to him (Luke 24:45). Thus they are equipped to proclaim the Good News and forgive sins. These dramatic events do not produce an experience and objective understanding of Christ's Being. They are the outcome of Christ facing his disciples, marked with the diachronic trace of obedience to the Father's will.

In the Otherness of the face of the Risen Christ, there is both a diachronic and immemorial trace. For Levinas, diachrony and immemorial time are interconnected terms. For diachrony is awakening to the immemorial past as an obligation to be responsible prior to any meaning of freedom. On the basis of the Levinasian idea of immemorial time, I would argue that Christ's Otherness inspires a responsibility of such far reaching consequence that answers even for another's responsibility - for it communicates the power to forgive and retain sins (John 19:23). By receiving the Spirit, the disciples enter time in its immemoriality, beyond the measurements, memories or

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[116] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 99.

representations of history, as it recalls "in the beginning with God" (John 1:1). Levinas likens this to the "*in*" of infinity.[117]

Through this trace of the immemorial past signified in Christ's mission and Resurrection, the disciples are summoned to their own kind of individuation or non-indifference in the Levinasian sense. Beyond the systematic comprehensions of ontological thought and intuitions of essence, and further than any project of the ego-consciousness, the disciples are subjected to a responsibility to the point of expiation. Such substitutionary responsibility bears the trace of the Crucifixion and Holy Saturday, as it is still embodied in the wounds of the Risen Christ. When faced with the Risen Other, this responsibility cannot be declined. Henceforth, in their new experiences of time, there can be no history that separates them from either Christ or the suffering Other.

Effacement and Ambiguity

So far I have spoken of diachrony and the immemorial past in the disciples' encounter with the Risen Other. An effacement is also implied. For the Spirit comes from Christ to the disciples without showing itself, beyond all categories to the point of invisibility and absence; for their encounter is beyond the domain of Being. Resurrection is related to Holy Saturday, but in a non-phenomenal manner. It penetrates the disciples only on the condition of unconditional receptivity and passivity to the inspiration of the Spirit and the will of the Father. The self-surrender involved with their encounter with Christ parallels Christ's own individuation or self-abandonment on Holy Saturday. As the dead were able to hear the Father's word of salvation through the Spirit, so in the same Spirit emanating from the Risen Christ, do the disciples become witnesses to the offer of salvation to all. In overwhelming consciousness, in turning it inside out and rendering it incapable of containing the event of salvation in any present, God's Word is revealed in its transcendence, and its self-effacing character. In short, there is confusion and ambiguity surrounding the revelation of God's word.

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[117] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.

The non-phenomenality of Christ's Resurrection also signifies ambiguity. If the Father's Word in the Risen Christ betokens a transcendence to the point of absence, it is in reference to the ethical site in which that Word can be articulated. The ambiguity involved means that the disciples cannot simply preach salvation to the world apart from their own responsibility. The meaning of salvation must be signified in a place and time when the neighbour's face draws near in all its forsakenness - otherwise God's transcendence will be reduced to essence. Furthermore, the non-phenomenality of the Resurrection has resulted in dogmatic statements (*doxa*) of God's beauty, goodness and truth. But such statements could be proposed within involving responsibility in this Levinasian sense. Hence, theology, if it is intent on appreciating God's transcendent alterity, must grapple with such ambivalence. Theology needs to be critically aware of the ease with which "God" can simply be thematised as a presence in consciousness. When theology tries to conceive of *praxis* and dogma together, it must continually pass through ambiguity, in the realisation that it could fall back into onto-theology and its associated form of presence. Only by way of "a crooked road", as Levinas remarks, can God's Word be signified in the world.[118]

Until now I have tried to show how the non-phenomenal characteristics of the Levinasian idea of the trace of *illeity* (otherness), namely diachrony, immemorial past, effacing and ambiguity, provide a unique perspective to the Resurrection. It remains to show how the idea of the Risen Christ's Otherness can challenge von Balthasar's analogical understanding of the indissoluble perichoresis between *doxa* (statements about God) and the beautiful, the good and the true. Here, it will be a matter of a concording of dogma and *praxis*.

The Resurrection and the Holy Spirit

When the disciples received the Spirit, they were inspired with the necessary grace to participate in Christ's self-abandonment. In their encounter with Christ, as I read it, the disciples are inspired by his Otherness, as he breathes the Holy Spirit on them. In the Spirit of Christ crucified and risen, the disciples are individuated to a life of expiation and

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[118] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 147.

responsibility for the lost and the dead. From a different angle, the Spirit-inspired individuation also signifies an indissoluble *perichoresis* between *doxa*, such as in, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23) and the Paschal encounter with the non-phenomenality of Christ's death, his going to the dead and of his rising from the dead. A concordance of dogma and *praxis* occurs through the disciples' encounter with Christ's Otherness. In its light, they are summoned to undertake Christ's mission to the point of expiation, as we have said.

Here we have the opportunity to articulate the beauty, goodness and truth of Christ's glory in the language of alterity. An appreciation of the Otherness of Christ provides an alternative to the analogical structure in von Balthasar's idea of the indissoluble *perichoresis* between the theological and philosophical transcendentals. Insofar as *doxa* concords with Christian *praxis* in the context of the Resurrection, it must exist beyond Being, that is through the encounter with the Otherness of Christ breathing the Spirit on the disciples. As a result, the glory of the Lord (the beautiful) is testified (the good) through the disciples' state of persecution and humiliation for others (the true). In this way, the Otherness of the Risen Christ summons the disciples to live out the beauty, goodness and truth of the Resurrection. Hence, beyond any conception of essence and the event of Being, the Otherness of Christ signifies God's glory in its good truth as the life of difficult freedom to the point of expiating for others. In this regard, a priority is placed upon the good.

Where von Balthasar prioritises the beautiful within an ontological scheme, we suggest giving priority, in a non-phenomenal way, to the Good – if we are to come to a critical understanding of the divine glory. In this suggested reprioritisation, the Good is beyond Being. It is realised only by way of self-surrender and conformity to the will of the Father, in an extreme state of passivity. In their self-dispossession and dedication to the divine will, the followers of Jesus exist beyond analogical or ontological structure that Being might entail. In this state of exposure, the disciples are vulnerable to accusation and persecution, and awaken to the responsibility of bearing the guilt and wretchedness

of others. This surrender of the ontological self for the sake of being responsible for the Other, and for the others, resists an analogical objectification. The ethical imperative immeasurably transcends any purely objective thematisations.

3.6 Conclusion

Throughout the Chapter, I have set out to complement von Balthasar's theological aesthetics and Trinitarian theology with a Levinasian emphasis on ethical metaphysics. As a consequence, I have emphasised that if God's transcendence is to have meaning, then an approach that passes beyond von Balthasar's sense of experience and of the ontological must be articulated. I have pursued this new formulation by employing Levinas' ideas of Otherness (the trace of *illeity*), the non-phenomenality of the face, the *there is*, encounter, and so forth.

More specifically, I have examined von Balthasar's Trinitarian aesthetic theology by developing a non-phenomenal sense of Holy Saturday and the Resurrection. Here we detected in von Balthasar's theology a residue of Husserlian phenomenological influence, in reference to a partial understanding of God. By a selective use of Levinas' thought, I have been able to venture beyond the confinements of phenomenology and ontology to discuss how Christ's expiation on Holy Saturday influences the encounter which took place between the Risen Christ and the disciples.

In this evaluation, I have given priority to Levinas' idea of otherness and passivity, and the consequent sense of the non-phenomenal. Further, I have been able to develop the Levinasian ideas of encounter, the face, immemorial time, diachrony, ambiguity, effacement and the Good beyond Being, all in relation to Christ going to the dead on Holy Saturday and his meeting with the disciples. As a focal text, I have referred frequently to John 20:19-23. Here we found an opportunity to develop von Balthasar's reflection of the Spirit's role in the mystery of Holy Saturday; and I have carried this development further in regard to Easter Sunday. Using Levinas' idea of *illeity* ("the *he* in the depth of the you"[119]) as inspiration, I have argued that the Spirit in the depths of

[119] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165.

Christ signifies the sense of salvation or the Word of the Father. In other words, through the activity of the Spirit, Christ offers salvation to the damned without any prior thematisation of the divinity of God. Furthermore, by applying the Levinasian ideas of diachrony, the immemorial, effacement and ambiguity, I have argued that the Spirit in the depths of the Risen Christ works to individuate the disciples, so that they share in the Christ-like passivity or self-offering to the Father's will. When Christ breathes the Spirit on the disciples, they begin to live it signifies beyond quantitative clock time, and speak of the Other, as they proclaim the glory of the Risen Christ. Hence, rather than having *doxa* as the presupposition for Christian *praxis* (in Scola's reading of von Balthasar[120]) in the context of the Resurrection, *doxa* concords with Christian *praxis*.

Furthermore, in reference to von Balthasar's understanding of *doxa* and Christian *praxis*, I argued that the ideas of God's glory, beauty, goodness, truth and unity can be better understood through the idea of Christ's Otherness, rather than through analogical thought. This meant bringing out a non-phenomenal understanding of how the Risen Christ's Otherness signifies *doxa* (Jn 20:23) in the disciples' disinterestedness. At stake is signifying the encounter with the Risen Christ as encounter beyond Being, and beyond the phenomena of experience, so that divine glory might be proclaimed without reducing it to theological concepts.

Hence, Levinas' idea of otherness (trace of *illeity*), with the corresponding aspects of diachrony, the immemorial past, effacement and ambiguity, provided an occasion for developing von Balthasar's idea of the indissoluble *perichoresis* between God's glory (*doxa*) and the one, the beautiful, the good and the true. Rather than classifying glory, the one, the beautiful, the good and the true as either, theological and philosophical transcendentals, it is more appropriate to conceive of them under the aegis of alterity. The transcendence of Christ's Otherness, rather than the transcendental ego, should be the locus in which to speak of the indissoluble *perichoresis* between God's glory and the interplay of beauty, goodness and truth. This prevents any attempt to grasp the Trinity and the Paschal Mystery analogically - or to confuse it with lived experience as may

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[120] See Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 37.

occur in fantasies inspired by private mystical revelations. In regards to this latter point, von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology was significantly influenced by the private revelations of Adrienne von Speyr.[121] The question remains as the extent von Balthasar's theology is over-influenced by von Speyr's mystical experience.

Levinas' emphasis of alterity can lead to a deeper reading and development of von Balthasar's theological aesthetics. This is not to suggest that interpreting Levinas' thought or terminology is a simple matter. For example, Levinasian "otherness" in relation to *illeity* and its different aspects, is notoriously enigmatic. Another limitation has been his rejection of eros, and a general neglect of the theme of joy, despite his evocative imagery of the encounter with the Other.

The next chapter will seek to develop von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory in the context of his reflection on Trinitarian inversion in the Incarnation. It will take our concern further supplement von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology with an ethical metaphysics - in the hope of articulating a Trinitarian *praxis* in Chapter Six.

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[121] See O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 74-77.

Chapter 4 von Balthasar's Theological Dramatic Theory

Introduction

The chapter introduces von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory. It focuses on the two theological themes of "person and mission" and "gift-as-given and gift-as-received", and the idea of Trinitarian and soteriological "Inversion". By approaching these areas in a Levinasian framework, the chapter elaborates them and considers their interrelationship.

Von Balthasar presents God's self-revealing role in dramatic terms. God is the author, director and an actor in the drama of the world's salvation. [1] The action always unfolds in a Trinitarian framework. Believers are at once the audience and actors as they themselves are represented by Christ and share in his mission.[2] Theo-drama is a "first theology" for von Balthasar in which theological conceptions can be developed in different theological forms, as in the case of soteriology, eschatology, Christology, pneumatology and Trinitarian theology.[3] These themes are deepened by means of a phenomenal and ontological conception of analogy (triads). We shall now examine this procedure more closely.

Triads

Our author treats of God's action in the world drama by way of two triads: "the triad of dramatic creativity (author, actor, director); and the triad of dramatic realisation (presentation, audience, horizon)".[4]

The triad of dramatic creativity employs metaphor to suggest that the author, actor and director together resemble the economic Trinity. As mentioned above, the author is referred to as God the Father, while the main actor is God the Son, and the director is God the Holy Spirit. As the author, the Father is most profoundly involved in the play.

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[1] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol.III. The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ,* translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 505.
[2] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III*, 527-535.
[3] See Aidan Nichols, *Introduction to Hans Urs von Balthasar. No Bloodless Myth. A Guide Through Balthasar's Dramatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 2000), 52,104-105.
[4] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III*, 532. For a full account of the two triads, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol.I. Prolegomena*, translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

His creative action arises from his responsibility to illuminate the meaning of existence. His action guides and accompanies the actor, Jesus Christ, to act out his role and thus to fulfil his mission. The directional role is assigned to the Holy Spirit. The divine director has the task of bringing together the author's creative vision and the actor's abilities to realise it perfectly. But, in a sense, both the author and actor are prior to the director in that their freedom and creativity are in no wise limited. The director is therefore more like a veiled phenomenon. He is present only as the play's atmosphere. He is the one prompting the actor to perfectly realise the original meaning and words of the author.[5]

Thus, in the first triad, dramatic creativity depends on the interplay of the author, actor and director. But, given that the play must move from rehearsal to live performance, von Balthasar conceives of a second triad related to dramatic realisation: presentation, audience and horizon. In the task of presentation, the director's role is to infuse the integrity of the author's text, not only into the actor's performance, but also into the response of the audience. For von Balthasar, the people in the audience are not purely spectators; they see their reactions and reflections represented by the actor on stage. Through their emotions, in their thought and imagination, they are involved with the actor's performance; they want it to succeed. They enter into the play's horizon of meaning as it has been created by the author, articulated by the actor and inspired by the director. However, the horizon of the theo-dramatic play is God's own. On stage, it can only have redemptive meaning in a fragmentary and broken way. When death intervenes it is tragedy. When it depicts the struggle for the Good, it is comedy. Exposed to judgment, it appears as either tragedy, comedy or tragi-comedy. Von Balthasar interprets the theo-drama's horizon of meaning as neither comedy nor tragedy, but a mixture of both. As the play alternates between weeping and laughter, it portrays the highest good of forgiveness.[6]

The two triads ultimately merge into each other. If the first reveals the economic Trinity in the world drama, the second shows how that drama is a sharing in the life of the

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[5] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 532-533 and Nichols, *No Bloodless Myth*, 29-32.
[6] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 533-535 and Nichols, *No Bloodless Myth*, 32-34.

Trinity.[7] Here, three questions emerge concerning the relation between the Trinity and the world drama.

The Trinity and the World Drama

First, von Balthasar asks whether God can appear in the play. The question arises from a concern to safeguard the divine transcendence, and not to reduce it merely to an immanence in the drama. The Christian answer is, "... that God has actually appeared in the play: in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, who possesses the Spirit 'without measure'".[8] The divine appearance is based therefore on the phenomenon of God's revelation in Christ. By seeking to show how God might appear in the play, von Balthasar has in mind the relation between the economic and absolute Trinity. Within this relationship, Jesus Christ points both to the Father and to the Spirit. He is both the definitive interpretation of the Father (Jn 1:18) and the one who admits others to the sphere of the Holy Spirit.

The play presumes an objective phenomenology inasmuch as the play becomes a play by being seen and being known. In the presentation of such a play, the drama between God and the world is enacted as the Father unveils the objective phenomenon of Christ as the manifestation of Trinitarian love. In this dramatic phenomenon, Christ is allowed to be seen and heard, just as the Father's word is understood through the Spirit so as to make personal sense to the audience in a supremely significant way. It makes personal sense because God's self-revealing and self-giving love is offered to the other to provoke a free response. It is significant because such love bears on the salvation of the whole world. God can enter, therefore, into the world drama on the phenomenal basis of the role and mission of Christ in the Spirit.

In conclusion to the question of whether God can appear in the play as a spectator or actor, von Balthasar states: "He [God] is *above* the play in that he is not trapped in it but *in* it insofar as he is fully involved in it. The Father seems to remain above the play since

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[7] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 535.
[8] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 506.

he sends the Son and the Spirit; but in fact he could not involve himself more profoundly than by sending them both: 'God so love the world that he did not spare his only Son, but gave him up for us all" (Jn 3:16 and Rom 8:32)'".[9] Christ, then, does not appear in the world drama in isolation from the Father and from the Spirit, so that the divine transcendence and immanence are respected. It follows that with the witness of the Spirit, both the Father and Son dedicate themselves eternally to the world's salvation.

The second question asks whether God as Trinity can be revealed in the person of Christ. Von Balthasar's Christology understands the idea of Christ's person as the coincidence of his *processio* and *missio*.[10] Logically, this suggests that Christ's self-giving is identical with his personal being. Before the beginning of the world, Christ has proclaimed his readiness to accept the mission. However, the logic is approached from the theo-dramatic viewpoint. All possibilities are grounded in God's freedom, since, in the tradition of negative theology, God is under no necessity in creating and redeeming the world. None the less, von Balthasar locates the world drama within the eternal dramatic interactions of the three divine persons, so that one flows from the other.[11]

Von Balthasar's explanation of this point takes into account the character of the mission of Christ: he knows himself to be the Son of the Father in manner which contrasts with the rest of humanity. More deeply, Christ's mission is divine and eternal in that only a divine person can carry out the Father's will: "Only a divine person can measure up to 'God's cause' and be God's 'agent' on earth".[12] The person of Christ is equal to the Father in divinity, and co-eternal with the Father's purpose and decision. In this eternal, intradivine exchange, the Spirit witnesses to the Father's will and to Christ's willingness to follow it. Accordingly, on the basis of Christ's obedience to the Father in the Spirit and his desire together with the Father to send the Spirit, von Balthasar discerns the divine essence as three-personal. Only God can reveal the intra-trinitarian relationships

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[9] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 514.
[10] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 533.
[11] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Theological Dramatic Theory, Vol. IV: The Action,* translated by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 327; and von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 509, 516.
[12] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 510.

by entering the world. Because the Son is hypostatically united to human nature, there exists the possibility of coming to some understanding of God's eternal life.[13]

Von Balthasar's first question led to an appreciation of how God appeared in the play in the person of Jesus Christ. His second question was answered in terms of the eternal identity existing between his Christ's person and mission as the ground of Trinitarian self-revelation. This brings us now to the third question concerning the Trinity's presence in the world drama. Von Balthasar writes: "Finally, we can ask whether God's inner, vital, triune life, which is the archetype of all being and hence of all history, finds expression as the play unfolds. Can it, must it be mirrored there?"[14] In terms of God's transcendence and immanence, he gives three responses. First, in creating the world, God chooses freely to be bound to it from its beginning to end. In so doing, he also leaves the world to its own process and confusion otherwise, as von Balthasar points out, "he would have to redeem himself ...".[15] As a result, he is free to guide and to intervene to the point of offering salvation. Second, within the distinction between Father and Son in the Spirit (the personal relationship within the *immanent* Trinity) there is a secondary and economic form, namely that the Father is the "central Actor". Although it might seem that the Father is a Spectator, he is however in the play in the same measure as the "acting Son" and "mediating Spirit" because of his willingness to give forsake his Son for the world (Jn 3:16).[16] Third, Christ's descent to hell signifies that God can simultaneously be immanent (stepping forth from God's self) while remaining transcendent (in God's self). This is possible through Christ's absolute response of obedience to the Father. Hence, through Christ's descent into hell (God's own reality), God experiences the abyss of hell.[17]

Furthermore, implied in the third question is the consideration of how a human consciousness can be related to the eternal personhood of Christ. Von Balthasar here keeps the salvific purposes of the Trinity in mind. It can fully enter the world drama only

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[13] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 510-511, 523.
[14] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 505.
[15] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 529.
[16] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 529-530.
[17] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 530.

when the human subject is assimilated to the divine personhood of Christ. Underlying the subject's personal conformity to the person of Christ is the notion of the trace or created image of eternal, divine Being. The further gift of grace transfigures and elevates this created image of God into a higher level of likeness. The human subject thus realises its true purpose through the self-surrender of faith in Christ. Von Balthasar's idea of faith "assimilating" the conscious subject to Christ's divine, triune life finds expression in the Pauline notion of Christ dwelling in the believer's heart through faith (Eph 3:17). This mode of indwelling derives from the mutual indwelling that characterises the life of the Trinity itself (Jn 14:23).[18]

Given the Levinasian and ethical focus of this thesis, we simply conclude this section with the question: Has von Balthasar sufficiently taken into account an ethical understanding of the Trinity's relation to the world drama?

Two Theological Themes

Having briefly considered the three questions in the above section, we wish now to focus on two major theological themes in von Balthasar's theo-dramatic presentation:

1. The unity between Christ's person and mission.
2. The unity between the Father's self-giving and the Son's receiving.

Both themes presume the person and role of the Holy Spirit, as the very intimacy existing between the Father and the Son. Let us take up each theme separately.

Christ's Person and Mission

First, the theme of person and mission was especially evident in the second question as presented above, as it asked how the person of Christ can reveal the three-personal God within the world drama. For von Balthasar, the identity of the person of Christ and his mission is the condition for the world-drama to become a theo-drama.[19] Because the Trinity has actually appeared in Jesus Christ, the Trinity is fully involved in the play.

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[18] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 525-529.
[19] Nichols, *No Bloodless Myth,* 103.

Von Balthasar states: "As we penetrate the consciousness of Jesus – as it expresses itself in his words and deeds, in his unique claim and his humble submission – we encounter the radiance of the mystery of his own divinity and of God's self-subsistent tri-personality. And the concept that included both is that of 'mission'."[20] Christ's mission is not only identical with his divine person, but also implicates the triune identity of God. It manifests the paradox involved in the synchrony of sublimity and lowliness in which Christ's powerlessness is indivisible from the divine omnipotence.[21]

This simultaneity of Christ's sublimity and lowliness inspires the effort to discover the meaning of divine Being. In this regard, the identity of Christ's *processio* and *missio* would entail the unveiling of God's Being in synchronic presence.[22] Does von Balthasar's thesis concerning Christ's person and *missio* reduce the phenomenon of God's self-revelation in Christ to a synchronous appearing in Being? We shall return to this question. Furthermore, von Balthasar cannot avoid understanding Christ's identity within the transcendental qualities of Being. For example, his concern for the transcendental of the good reveals a sense of immanence based upon the knowledge gained from the theo-drama and ontological Christology. The problem of presence prompts two questions. First, is it in fact possible to represent the phenomenon of God's self-revelation in Christ as an objective reality? Second, if so, how could language ever adequately represent Christ's identity?[23]

There is a third concern. When von Balthasar describes Christ's identity in terms of the coincidence of his person and mission, does he in fact fall into the danger of confusing the two? In the Thomist tradition, for example, the eternal divine processions are distinguished from the temporal missions.[24] Is von Balthasar hurrying to an identification of terms that should be more carefully distinguished? Von Balthasar's preference is

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[20] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 515.
[21] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV,* 335; and von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 515.
[22] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 99-101. Here, I am using Levinas' idea of synchrony as a basis to question von Balthasar's theo-dramatic theory.
[23] These two questions point to the twofold crisis of representation that George Steiner has alluded to. See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 3.
[24] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Vol. I*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster MD: Christian Classics, 1981) *Questions 27, 43*, 147-151, 219-226.

clear: "... there is the a priori positing of a formal identity between person and mission ('my existence is one with my universal mission'), which no human being is able fully to realise in existential terms".[25] But, according to Levinas, one of Husserl's most interesting theses in phenomenology is that different regions not only have differences in essence, but also differences in existence.[26] It seems to me that von Balthasar is aware of the fundamental paradox between the two regions of Christ's person and mission, although he considers that they have the same existence and essence. He seeks to overcome this paradox through his idea of the a priori or immemoriality of Christ's person being one with his mission.

Furthermore, it is clear that von Balthasar does not confuse the verbal sense of "Being" with the nominal sense of "beings". We can see this most clearly if we take note of this ontological difference in the context of the assertion that Christ's person and mission are identical. The verbal sense of Being would refer to what sanctions the identity between Christ's person and mission, namely the sense of an a priori stating that Christ's mission has always been present in his consciousness. Being in this sense is an event, a "*Sendung*", that has always being present in Christ's consciousness as mission. Von Balthasar writes: "... this mission has always been present in his consciousness *as mission* [that is, *Sendung*, lit. 'sending']; in other words, it is not primarily something he himself has conceived and taken upon himself as a private individual. Rather, he is the one who, from before all time, has had the task – indeed he *is* the task – of fulfilling this universal design".[27] On the other hand, the nominal sense of beings refers to the subject.[28] Hence, we can distinguish Jesus Christ (the nominal sense) from his essences of person and mission (the verbal sense). Accordingly, we can find that von Balthasar clearly does not confuse them. He integrates them with an emphasis on the verbal aspect of Being, that is, of defining Christ's person as one with his mission. This means that a priority is placed upon understanding Christ's essence rather than Christ, for example, the sense of Christ beyond theory and understanding.

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[25] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 165-166.
[26] See Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, 4.
[27] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 167-168.
[28] For a discussion on the nominal sense of "being", see Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 52-53.

Von Balthasar has criticised Heidegger for not firmly answering the question of God in his fundamental ontology. It is most apparent in his criticism of Heidegger's construction of the ontological difference as a reduction of the difference between the finite and infinite. Such a reduction is a failure in intellectual courage to address the question of God.[29] In contrast, von Balthasar understands the ontological difference to be a sign of humanity's creaturehood. Given this understanding, God offers to humanity a share in the abundance of divine Being,[30] as this is represented *par excellence* in Jesus Christ. In other words, it is not the gift of Being, but God's gift of Being in the person and mission of Jesus Christ that enables God to become immanent in the world drama. Von Balthasar even points to the need to go beyond "Heidegger's formulations"[31] in regard to the gift of Being. Because Heidegger's formulations are without "the complement and correction of a philosophy of prayer," [32] they lead ultimately to tyranny and exploitation. Von Balthasar thus reads a sense of isolation in Heidegger's notion of Being. His "'there is' Being'", bears a striking resemblance to Levinas' conception of Heideggerian Being as depersonalising. I propose that von Balthasar, against Heidegger, rightly seeks to explain the identity existing between Christ's person and mission is not a given finality, and therefore it can never be exhausted by human thought. None the less, he does not succeed in extricating his thought from the problem of representing God as a presence in consciousness.

Gift-as-Given and Gift-as-Received

The second theological theme I wish to bring to attention is that of gift-as-given and gift-as-received, that is, the unity between the Father's self-giving and the Son's receiving. Von Balthasar presents this double aspect of gift in order to explore the kenotic interrelationships implied in the Trinitarian life. He explicitly focuses upon the relations existing between the Father and Son in their common spiration of the Spirit. The aspect of gift-as-given speaks of the Father's generation of the Son. The aspect of gift-as-received evokes the Son's thankful and self-surrendering openness towards the Father.

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[29] See Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 174.
[30] See Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad*, 173-174.
[31] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 159.
[32] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 159.

The distinction between these two aspects of the gift is kept open by the Holy Spirit. However, the distinction is transcended in the life of the Trinity. Von Balthasar describes it as the absolute gift or the "We" that the Father and Son have in common.[33] Concerning the kenotic dynamism enacted within the primal drama of the Trinity, von Balthasar writes:

> It [Christ's thanksgiving] is a Yes to the primal kenosis of the Father in the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness: omnipotence, since he gives all; powerlessness, since nothing is as truly powerful as the gift. Here, spanning the gulf of the Divine Persons' total distinctness, we have a correspondence between the Father's self-giving, expressed in generation, and the Son's thanksgiving and readiness (a readiness that goes to the limit of forgiveness). It is a profound mystery of faith. Thus the absolute is manifest as "We" in the identity of the gift-as-given and the gift-as-received in thanksgiving, which can be such by attesting, maintaining and fueling the infinite distinction between Father and Son. Thus, within the distinction, the gift is not only the presupposition of an unsurpassable love: it is also the realised union of love.[34]

In this passage, von Balthasar develops the notion of gift in the interests of a more profound understanding of the primal drama of the Trinity. The self-giving exchange between the Father and Son is manifested through the Spirit. Kenotic difference is the basis for *perichoresis*. The event of the Father's generation and the Son's thankful disponibility to the claims of the Father along with the Spirit's bridging of the two, is one with God's Being. In contrast, therefore, to Heidegger's idea of the ontological difference between Being and the nominal entity, God's Being is identical with the event of Trinitarian self-giving. Here, the reality of the gift enacted in Jesus Christ connects essence and hypostasis, love and otherness, unity and difference, kenotic self-emptying and reciprocal indwelling.[35]

In the play of unity and difference, the gift implies the diastasis between the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. But it also envisages the overcoming of this distance or difference as the divine persons dwell in one another in love. Indeed, the primordial kenotic events of generation and spiration within the Trinity are identical with God's Being as love.

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[33] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 326, 333.
[34] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 326.
[35] See Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 59-64 and von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III*, 518.

Von Balthasar speaks of an absolute gift as the "We" that the Father and Son have in common, as transcending their difference in the Godhead. It could be objected that such a conception of gift represents its metamorphosis, as if the goodness of kenotic giving is metamorphosed into God's Being. However von Balthasar speaks of transcendence[36] rather than metamorphosis or even absorption. Indeed, his sense of transcendence includes a consideration of suffering in God. Because of the transcendence of divine self-giving, omnipotence and powerlessness are united; and from it issues the self-emptying which includes exposure to suffering.

A further link between transcendence and suffering is found in the diastasis existing between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. Von Balthasar writes:

> We cannot say that the Father is involved in "risk" by allowing his Son to go to the Cross, as if only then could he be sure of the earnestness of the Son's indebtedness and gratitude. However, if we ask whether there is suffering in God, the answer is this: there is something in God that can develop into suffering. This suffering occurs when the recklessness with which the Father gives away himself (and *all* that is his) encounters a freedom that, instead of responding in kind to this magnanimity, changes it into a calculating, cautious self-preservation. Thus contrasts with the essentially divine recklessness of the Son, who allows himself to be squandered, and of the Spirit who accompanies him.[37]

Von Balthasar's idea of gift depends not only on the unity of kenotic otherness and God's Being, but also on its phenomenality in suffering. The "something in God" refers to the self-giving of the Trinitarian recklessness of divine love. Such "recklessness" has no limits; it must bear the "unbearable".[38] It follows that within God's Being of love, there is a defencelessness in which God endures the sinfulness of humanity. Hence, the Son, following the Father's will in the Spirit, must squander himself, so that the creature's "No" can be left behind by the Son's all-embracing "Yes".[39]

Von Balthasar's theology of gift is conceived first in an ontological fashion, with its implications of a search for the meaning of God's Being. Secondly, he employs a

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[36] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 333.
[37] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 327-328.
[38] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 329.
[39] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 329-330.

distinctive phenomenology in relation to the manifestation of the good truth of divine Being. This ontologically modulated phenomenology is not unrelated to another set of distinctions, expressed in the relation between thematisation and representation. Thematisation allows meaning to take place whereas representation manifests the meaning as a continuous presence in consciousness.[40] Von Balthasar's theology parallels this relation.

The event of gift occurs in a passage from objective propositions (thematisation) to their manifestation in presence (re-presentation). For example, on the one hand for von Balthasar, we have thematisations, that is, expositions and proofs of God's Being of love. On the other, we have representations, namely the experience of God's Being of love. Von Balthasar has treated the gift in terms of gift-as-given and gift-as-received. He points out that, "... within the distinction, the gift is not only the presupposition of an unsurpassable love: it is also the realized union of this love".[41] It seems to me that such thematisation results in re-presentation. This is because it amounts to only a partial understanding of God. After all, von Balthasar has stated, "God is known as mystery in the form of self-consciousness" in which there might only be a glimmer of divine truth.[42]

From the consideration of these two theological themes, it becomes clear that we must think of the infinite distinction between Father and Son in a way that goes beyond the categories of objectivity, Being and presence. It is a matter of resituating this primordial distinction to the area of ethical metaphysics, rather than allow this Trinitarian distinction to be reduced to requirements of an ontological phenomenology. With this in mind, we come now to the major task of the chapter, namely, to bring von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory into contact with Levinas' ethical metaphysics. I will focus on von Balthasar's analysis of Trinitarian and soteriological Inversion. It covers both the theme of Christ's person and mission, and that of gift-as-given and gift-as-received. I will proceed firstly by introducing the notion of Trinitarian and soteriological Inversion.

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[40] For a discussion on the ideas of thematisation and representation, see Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 98-100.
[41] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.IV*, 326.
[42] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 272.

Trinitarian and Soteriological Inversion

The category of "inversion" is developed in relation to Jesus' soteriological obedience. More specifically, it underscores the active role of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation.[43] At this point, von Balthasar is at his most original in that he gives the Spirit a primary role in the operation of the Son's humanity and mission. The "inversion" occurs in the Spirit's movement from passivity to activity in the Incarnational event.

Von Balthasar clearly presumes that the activity of the Spirit is both subjective and objective. He writes:

> The Spirit does not prevent the Son from receiving his mission directly but makes it possible for him to receive it obediently. An infinite variety of possibilities is available to the Spirit: he can act more as the subjective Spirit who is common to Father and Son or as the more objective "third person", as the witness, the product and the pledge of their mutual relationship. Accordingly, the Son experiences his mission on earth, now as something more personal, now as something more impersonal. Knowing himself to be identical with this mission, he sometimes sees the generating and sending Father in it more immediately; at other times, he worships the Father in more veiled, objectified form and "believes" – albeit in a unique sense that goes beyond all analogies.[44]

As subjective, the Spirit is the personal expression of the Son's obedience to the Father's will, as in Christ knowing that he is the Father's Son and has been sent by him. In contrast, the Spirit seems to occupy more a transcendent position as the one who witnesses to the mutual relationship of Father and Son. This is especially the case at the climax of Christ's mission, when during the Crucifixion the Father's presence is completely veiled.[45]

The subjective and objective contexts suggest that the Son encounters the Spirit's activity at extreme points, that is, either in the immediacy of Jesus' experience of the Father's love or in his experience of God-forsakenness. Von Balthasar, in his presentation of Trinitarian Inversion, in fact, stresses the objective action of the Spirit over the subjective.

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[43] von Balthasar's account of Trinitarian Inversion is found in *Theo-Drama, Vol.III*, 183-191, 521-523.
[44] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III*, 522.
[45] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III*, 522.

For it is the role of the Spirit, as the divine "director" of the drama, to bring into effect the Trinity's salvific design, above all in the culminating drama of the Passion. The active role of the Spirit in the Passion leads the Incarnate One to undergo suffering, death and God-forsakenness.

Von Balthasar assumes that subjectivity and objectivity are aspects of the eternal constitution of the Spirit. He writes:

> After all, the Spirit has a twofold face from all eternity: he is breathed forth from the one love of Father and Son as the expression of their united freedom – he, as it were, the objective form of their subjectivity; but at the same time, he is the objective witness to their difference-in-unity or unity-in-difference.[46]

Two points arise that require comment: first, the Spirit's passivity takes the form of the Father's and Son's common spiration of the Spirit, and, secondly, the Spirit's activity witnesses to the fact that while their difference is kept open, it is also transcended in the Godhead. Together, both aspects are described as a "twofold face". But there is a further consideration. The difference to which von Balthasar refers could be named as "otherness". As the domain, not only of relationships, but also of kenotic self-dispossession, such otherness signifies passivity and activity. Let us examine this further in regard to the "twofold face" of the Spirit.

The first aspect of the Spirit's face identifies the passive role of the Spirit or the Father and Son's common spiration of the Spirit. The second aspect identifies the active role of the Spirit as a "rule" [47] that commands what has been determined from all eternity, namely the Trinity's salvific plan. Von Balthasar points out that the second aspect interrupts and veils the first. It interrupts the first because the Spirit exists in and over the Son. Such an active role veils the first aspect because the Spirit must now take over the function of uniting Jesus' I-consciousness with his mission-consciousness.[48] When activity veils passivity in this way, it is as if, in the witness of the Spirit, the first aspect is

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[46] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187.
[47] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.
[48] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187-188.

more akin to a "trace" within the second. The eternal twofold face of the Spirit anticipates the passive and active elements in every aspect of the mystery of Christ.

Von Balthasar goes further: "It is as if the Spirit, now embodied in the form of a rule, says to them both: This is what you have wanted from all eternity; this is what, from all eternity, we have determined!"[49] In the Incarnation, the passivity of the Spirit's face is inverted into an activity as the drama is played out. In this perspective, the Spirit's activity has the appearance of direction and rule as the active aspect veils the passive aspect. The Spirit's active role must include the trace of passivity in relation to the Father and the Son, in bringing God's salvific plan into effect. In this passive guise, the Holy Spirit must witness "the hard facts that must be"[50] as the Son is sent into the world in the likeness of human flesh. The communication of the rule is more impersonal (objective) than personal (subjective) in von Balthasar's presentation. Above all, it is the role of the Spirit to maintain the diastasis/difference between the Father and Son during Jesus' earthly mission (whilst transcending it in the Godhead). It allows for kenosis and suffering, as the Son suffers the Father's abandonment during the Passion.

It is evident that von Balthasar's develops then notion of Trinitarian Inversion with two theological themes in mind, namely Christ's person and mission, and gift-as-given and gift-as-received.

The unity between Christ's person and mission is in fact the focus of the whole volume of *Theo-drama vol. III*: "The point of identity is his mission from God (*missio*), which is identical with the Person *in* God and *as* God (*processio*): this is the main conclusion of the present volume".[51] In the context of Trinitarian Inversion, von Balthasar indicates that the first aspect of the Spirit's face from all eternity is signified by Christ's person being identical with his mission. This in turn points to the Trinity's salvific and immemorial decision for the Logos to be made flesh. This would suggest that the first aspect of the Spirit's face is not only passive, but also immemorial, that is to say, without

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[49] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.
[50] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.
[51] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 533.

any imaginable beginning. The first aspect highlights the immanent Trinity, while the second projects the immanent Trinity into the world.

For the Trinity to be projected onto the economic plane, the Spirit's second aspect must veil Jesus' awareness as a person from his awareness of his mission. This is because, as von Balthasar explains, the demands of mission take the uttermost priority: "In the Passion, the crucial priority is for Jesus to take upon himself the sinners' situation of God-forsakenness; in such a case, immediacy (which always remains a fact) is veiled to the highest degree".[52] This provides the possibility for the Spirit to take an active, leading role in the Son's humanity. For example, the active role of the Spirit during the Crucifixion becomes the hard fact of demanding what has been determined in the mutual will between the Father and Son, namely doing what the Father has commanded (Jn 14:31).[53]

Let us turn to the theological theme of gift-as-given (the Father's self-giving expressed in generation) and gift-as-received (the Son's thanksgiving and readiness) in regards to the Spirit's passivity and activity. This theme is related to Christ's *processio* and *missio*.[54] There are three ways in which von Balthasar's notion of Trinitarian Inversion bears on his theology of gift.

First, the passive role looks to the union of the Father and Son in self-giving love. Second, the Spirit's active role or Inversion reveals that their difference or kenotic otherness is more a veiled union of self-giving love. It is veiled in the economic plane of the world because the Father must make his will known to the incarnate Son through the Spirit. If it was not veiled, there would be no point for the Father to make his will known. Third, the union of the Father and Son in the Spirit takes the form of a rule commanding what has always been determined from all eternity. These three perspectives bear on von Balthasar's phenomenology of Gift.

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[52] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 522.
[53] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187-188, 522.
[54] See for example *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187-188 and *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 326, 335.

Looking at these three points together, there is a sense that the Father's gift of the Son's generation depends on the action of the Spirit enabling the incarnate Son to give himself for the world. This suggests that a gift is given through generation, through the kenosis of the Spirit's inversion and through the Son's self-giving in death. In other words, we could speak of God as Gift in three senses: as generation, as an inversion of passivity to activity and as kenotic otherness. However, such conceptions are onto-theological because they stress a theological perspective of the transcendental qualities of God's Being. The problem is that one could confuse the word "God" with essence. And furthermore, the problem is heightened by the desire to manifest the essence as an experience. This is but a glimpse at the unsolvable problem of understanding God as gift. Granted such an aporia, I want to argue that there is a way forward to develop von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology.

So far I have brought out three areas of Trinitarian Inversion. First, I had looked at the Spirit's subjective and objective activity in the economy of salvation. Second, I discussed von Balthasar's analogy of the Spirit having a twofold face from all eternity. And finally, I had examined the two theological themes of Christ's person and mission and of gift-as-given and gift-as-received. Three points emerge:

First, that kenosis is a coinciding of passivity and activity.
Second, that the Spirit's inversion takes the form of a rule and veils Jesus' awareness as a person from his awareness of his mission.
Third, God as Gift is structured on generation, kenotic otherness and suffering.

We now attempt to read von Balthasar's conception of Trinitarian Inversion through a Levinasian lens. Once more, we will focus on two theological themes, Christ's person and mission, and gift-as-given and gift-as-received.

Christ's Person and Mission

Von Balthasar speaks of Christ's person and mission coinciding through the activity of the Spirit under the two aspects already mentioned. He writes:

> There can be no question of the Incarnation interrupting the common spiration of the Spirit by Father and Son, otherwise the Spirit could not exist in and over the Son. Rather we must say, with regard to the *first aspect* of the Spirit, that the identity ... in Jesus between his I-consciousness and his mission-consciousness, or (what comes to the same thing) Jesus' consent to the Father's wish to send him, the coincidence of his fundamental free will with that of the Father, points back to a mysteriously supratemporal event that can be nothing but the unanimous salvific decision on the part of the Trinity, according to which it was resolved to send the Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3).[55]

The action of Spirit commands and directs the Trinitarian decision. Since the decision is immemorial, that is, it has been determined from all eternity, it is now up to the Spirit to take the form of a rule. As a result, the Incarnation must interrupt the first aspect of the Spirit. It becomes clear that the Spirit exists in and over the Son to such an extent that it interrupts and veils the common spiration by the Father and Son. Von Balthasar's sense of pneumatic interruption seems to have some parallel to Levinas' idea of dis-inter-ested-ness, an idea often referred to in a variety of ways such as divine comedy, otherwise than Being, desire for the Good and even to the ethical metaphysical notion of incarnation.[56] Often, Levinas will write disinterestedness (*désinteressement*) as *dés-inter-esse-ment* in order to show the break with Being (*esse*). I want to argue that the Spirit's active role (interrupting the common spiration of the Spirit by Father and Son) in the production of the Son's humanity shows some parallel to Levinas' idea of disinterestedness as divine comedy and as incarnation. Let us first take up the sense of disinterestedness as divine comedy.

Divine Comedy

Levinas' conception of divine comedy[57] focuses on the ethical plot between the I, the Other and *illeity*. The threesome of the I, the Other and *illeity* signifies that love for the

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[55] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187.
[56] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 85, 139.
[57] See Chapter Two, p.46.

other is the true measure of humanity. Levinas states that the subject becomes a heart.[58] In the ethical plot, the subject, I, is the moral self or a self that is a hostage for the Other. As a hostage, the self is in a state of kenosis, extreme passivity or exposure towards the Other's destitution. The Other in this case refers to the face of the neighbour drawing near. Lastly, *Illeity* signifies the way in which God or the Infinite is indirectly in the midst of the moral self and the Other.[59] Levinas states: "The subject is inspired by the Infinite, which, as *illeity*, does not appear, is not present, has always already past; it is neither theme, telos nor interlocutor".[60]

In my reading, Levinas' sense of comedy has behind it a sense of the tragic. The Other's destitution abruptly stifles the laughter before it breaks out. In Levinas' words, "the laughter sticks to one's throat".[61] It follows that the laughter signifies the extent to which one's conscience is called into question through exposure to the Other's destitution. Behind the laughter that symbolises the desire for the Good is the absent presence of God in the Other's face. This absent presence is what Levinas names as the trace of *illeity*. He also states that *illeity* is a disturbance that can be confused with the stirrings of the *there is*. I propose that this disturbance evokes a sense of tragedy where the subject is frightened out of its spectatorial attitude, producing a course of action in union with the Absolute Good.[62] Such responsibility is not the product of theoretical consciousness, but is due to an extreme passivity of responsibility.

The point is this: behind the comic dimension where the moral self puts his or her conscience into question is the tragic dimension that shocks the human soul and inverts it from interestedness to disinterestedness. Tragedy is to realise that the self is always too late to give responsibility for the Other. It is a shock to the soul. In an example that brings out the tragic dimension, Levinas quotes Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, "Each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and for each one, and I more than

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[58] See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 133, 143 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 168.
[59] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 162-166.
[60] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 148.
[61] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 167.
[62] For an analysis of the difference and connection between tragedy and comedy, See Nichols, *No Bloodless Myth*, 33, 37-38.

others".[63] Such a signification of responsibility is the tragedy of the human soul because for the most part it is lacking in responsibility. Levinas stresses that responsibility is beyond consciousness, hyperbolic and before one's freedom to exist in and for oneself. This seems to affirm that infinite responsibility for the Other has never been present to consciousness. Any realisation would likely shock and disturb the human soul by overwhelming it with such an idea. Consciousness would not be able to contain such a thought of *infinite* responsibility.[64] It is here that we might begin to make some sense of Levinas' ethical plot. One the one hand it is a tragedy of having been already late for the encounter. On the other, the laughter sticks in the throat of the moral self when the Other approaches in his or her destitution. If we put this together, it would not be surprising to say that Levinas' ethical plot results in trauma.[65]

Levinas does in fact describe the sense of being affected by the Other as a "... trauma that has surprised me completely".[66] The trauma refers to awakening to the immemorial past of God having ordered the self to be responsible. In common life we might associate the idea of trauma with madness or mental disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder. From a psychiatric perspective, the nature of trauma is both catastrophic and overwhelming to such an extent that it can shatter one's whole view of the world.[67] It would seem that trauma is like a hyperbolic experience of reality. It is so overwhelming that one is no longer able to cope with reality. It might appear that trauma is like an aporetic experience, an encounter with a problem (reality) that cannot be solved. In this regard, the Levinasian aporia could well be the fact of always being unable to fulfil responsibility before the Other.

Significantly, Robyn Horner in her discussion on negative theology has pointed out: "We are reminded that the only way through an aporia is through decision, a decision that

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[63] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 168.
[64] See Chapter Two, pp.40-41.
[65] See Chapter Two, pp.48-49.
[66] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 148.
[67] For a psychiatric understanding of trauma, see Sidney Bloch and Bruce S. Singh (eds.), *Foundations of Clinical Psychiatry*, Second Edition (Carlton South, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 149.

passes through madness".[68] In this regard, Levinas' idea of trauma, like his notion of otherwise than Being,[69] reveals a similarity to the aporetic nature of negative theology. For example, there is madness (tragedy) that ultimately leads to an ethical decision (comedy). Levinas' thought might well offer a new twist to negative theology by describing how an immemorial past safeguards God's transcendence from presence.

Levinas emphasises that trauma cannot be identified as lived experience. He points out that the signification of the Infinite is a "trauma that has surprised me completely; the order has never been represented, for it has never been presented, not even in the past coming in memory ...".[70] The trauma signifies that there has been an encounter with the Infinite, or God, or even perhaps with the stirrings of the *there is*. He explains that the traumatic encounter breaks-up the unity between the *noesis* and *noema* (representation). This would entail a noesis without a noema or transcendence to the point of absence.[71] In less complex terms, the encounter speaks of awakening to an order of obedience that has never been present in any way. But because the encounter is immemorial, that is, never been represented and therefore unheard, it is a complete surprise, a trauma. This suggests that it is an absolute trauma to signify God as desire for the Good. In a sense, such an encounter is also frightening. We can perhaps see this more clearly when Levinas describes the order of obedience as that which "slips into me 'like a thief'".[72] Accordingly, granted that the encounter with a thief is frightening, it would be ever more frightening if the thief is in fact God or the Infinite.

For Levinas, God's transcendence is otherwise than the totality of Being and beyond the immanence of lived experience. This might suggest that the tragic element of God must lie hidden behind the divine comedy. God's Word may be heard only through the encounter with the Other's face. In the analysis of Levinas' sense of disinterestedness as divine comedy, I have tried to show how the Levinasian ethical plot has both comic and tragic dimensions as well as an aporetic dimension akin to negative theology.

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[68] Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 232.
[69] See Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign*, 202.
[70] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 148.
[71] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 175 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.
[72] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 148.

The tragic-comedy element also characterises von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory.[73] Now, the task remains to show how Levinas' idea of divine comedy leads to a deeper reading of von Balthasar's treatment of the Incarnation interrupting the common spiration of the Spirit by Father and Son. What stands out most significantly is Levinas' trinodal structure of the divine comedy. Ward has also found another trinodal structure in his desire to draw attention to similarities between Levinas and Karl Barth.[74] But Ward's analysis tends to go too far. He uses the term, "*perichoresis*", to describe the relation between the paternal, the filial and the maternal: "The perichoresis of the three elements – the disclosure of the paternal and the unrepresentable *illeity* in the *ipseity* of the son through maternal Desire – follows the same logic of revelation as Barth's 'three elements of unveiling, veiling and impartation [*die Mitteilung*]'".[75] This is the danger that I wish to avoid, as it seems to read Levinas' thought in a too theological manner. In my view, the trinodal structure is ethical rather than theological. For that reason, a Levinasian approach to von Balthasar's idea of Trinitarian Inversion would work in a distinctively ethical perspective.

Ward's analogical likening of Levinas' trinodal structure to *perichoresis* tends to lead to the language of totality. It is important to be sensitive to Levinas' own background, the contexts of his thought and the originality of his thinking. Let us turn, then, to his idea of trauma and its possible application in von Balthasar's theology. Up to now, I have brought out the idea of trauma from the context of Levinas' conception of divine comedy. Its significance lies in developing a sense of non-phenomenality in the theo-drama. With this in mind, let us look at von Balthasar's idea of the action of the Spirit interrupting the Father's and Son's common spiration. It is like a trauma that has surprised the Son completely. The Trinitarian Inversion causes the Son to have an overwhelming encounter with the Father's will. Furthermore, it is a madness that the Son must follow without knowledge of the unity between his "I-consciousness" and his "mission-consciousness". Thus, the Spirit's traumatic action causes an interruption of the Son's consciousness, and he submits to the rule of the Spirit.

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[73] See Nichols, *No Bloodless Myth*, 39.
[74] For a further discussion of this point see Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 164-165.
[75] Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 166.

Under a Levinasian lens, it seems to me that the Spirit's action testifies that the Trinity's plan is ultimately beyond the objectivity of Being, that is, the distortion of truth. Such objectivity distorts truth because it subordinates subjectivity. In this regard, subjectivity is reduced to the totality of egoisms struggling with others.[76] Hence, Christ's earthly and paschal life evokes a non-phenomenality, namely what is otherwise than Being. For example, Christ's awakening to the sign of eternal, triune plan (such as through his baptism, cf. Matt 3:16) is a trauma that has surprised him completely. The trauma may well be the action of the Spirit that affects Christ's consciousness to such a point that Christ is for the Other and not in-himself and for-himself. The drama of Trinitarian Inversion can be likened to an effaced trace or inner secret which the Spirit commands through Christ's paschal life. Christ encounters the unknowable as the Holy Spirit accompanies him through the "madness" of the Cross.

It would be difficult to isolate the tragic or comic dimension of the Spirit's action in the operation of Christ's humanity since both dimensions coincide. In von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory, the Trinitarian mystery is not approached from the distinction between the tragic or comic, but from that of negative theology and of God's will in the world drama.[77] Differing from von Balthasar in this respect, I have given more weight to the dimension of the ethical-metaphysical. This can be taken as an aspect of negative theology in the sense that it seeks to prevent God from being represented. Looked at as a whole, the Spirit's action is beyond representation (thought and knowledge) and is a trauma that awakes Christ to the Trinity's salvific plan. As a result of the trauma, the Son possesses the Spirit beyond any need to explain or prove it. Even though the identity between his person and mission is unknowable, it is signified in his decision in the Spirit to follow the Father's will.

Von Balthasar's idea of Trinitarian Inversion needs to be sharpened further with the language of alterity. Levinas' use of the term, "incarnation", is instructive at this point, as it suggests how Christ's subjectivity can be redefined on the basis of alterity rather

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[76] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 98-99 and Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 3-4.
[77] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 327.

than the realm of self-consciousness. Underlying von Balthasar's notion of Trinitarian Inversion is an ontological phenomenology that dramatises how Christ can be seen, known and experienced. Instead, by positing the Spirit's action in the site of ethical metaphysics, the focus can be directed to reflect how Christ might awaken to the Trinity's plan. The difference here signifies a redirection away from transcendental subjectivity (representation and ontology) to the priority of a non-phenomenal subjectivity (ethical metaphysics).

Let us now turn to the Levinasian idea of incarnation with a view to understanding and bringing out its connection with other Levinasian ideas, namely exposedness, maternity, having a heart, recurrence, *ipseity*, ethical hypostasis, the hither side and to disincarnation.

Levinas and Incarnation

Levinas uses the term "incarnation"[78] to describe the moral self's extreme passivity towards the Other. For example, he states:

> This exposedness is not like self-consciousness, this recurrence of the subject to himself, confirming the ego by itself. The recurrence in awakening is something one can describe as a shudder of incarnation through which *giving* takes on meaning, as the primordial dative of the *for another*, in which a subject becomes a heart, a sensibility, and hands which give.[79]

In the reflection, Levinas describes incarnation in relation to exposedness and the recurrence of *ipseity* (selfhood or the oneself). First, let us look at the idea of exposure[80] to draw out Levinas' meaning of incarnation. Exposure refers to the inversion of the ego, from being for-oneself to being for-the-other. It is the very possibility of giving[81], suffering and trauma, and of even taking responsibility for the persecutor's abuse and wounding. Levinas further speaks of exposure as maternity[82], the gestation of responsibility for others in the self. In my reading, the idea of exposure speaks of incarnation as the penetration of otherness (the Other's look of destitution) to the extent

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[78] See Chapter Two, pp.50-51.
[79] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 168.
[80] See Chapter Two, pp.45-46.
[81] See Chapter Two, p.50.
[82] See Chapter Two, pp.45-46.

of deposing self-consciousness. Exposedness is therefore not like self-consciousness because the self cannot represent or think of itself as a self. Rather, the self, removed from the present (from representation), is torn from itself in order to offer its soul to another.[83] Furthermore, Levinas' idea of the self as a body (incarnation) is not a biological one. He writes, "The fundamental concept of ipseity, while tied to incarnation, is not a biological concept. (Indeed, must not the original meaning of the 'lived body' be sought in the 'in itself' conceived as 'in one's skin'?)[84] To be "in one's skin" signifies substitution to the point where the self inverts itself into a responsibility for another. Here, the self is exposure to the point of substituting for another.[85]

The second sense of Levinas' idea of incarnation that I wish to take up is that of self-recurrence.[86] According to Levinas, recurrence means to be disinterested and is exemplified in the state of being a hostage.[87] This seems to be a more general meaning given to recurrence. The idea of, "... recurrence of the subject to himself," suggests something otherwise than self-consciousness. Here, the self is already formed with absolute passivity towards the Other. Recurrence therefore looks at how the self is constituted. For example, Levinas explains that recurrence is a contraction of *ipseity* from ego-centredness to otherness. This is because, for the most part, *ipseity* is dominated by consciousness. However the recurrence to oneself signifies a new *ipseity* or specifically the withdrawal to its secret identity of alterity.[88] Touching on messianic theology, Levinas uses the idea of Creation, namely of being made in the likeness and image of God (and therefore being like God responsible for the universe), as a way to explain recurrence.[89]

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[83] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 48-50, 76-79.
[84] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 87. For a further discussion, see Robert Bernasconi, "What is the question to which 'substitution' is the answer?" in Critchley and Bernasconi (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 242.
[85] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 115.
[86] See Chapter Two, p.45.
[87] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 117.
[88] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 105 and Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 84-85..
[89] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 86-89.

Levinas' description of recurrence as a "shudder of incarnation" refers to the break-up of the self's conscious relation to itself, resulting in the self emerging as an ethical hypostasis. Accordingly, the moral self can no longer justify expressing itself as an ego, an I or oneself. It thereby withdraws to the "hither side" (an immemorial time outside the order of Being)[90] of its consciousness. As a result, the self enters into a relationship of otherness in contrast to its previous hypostatic existence of being for-itself. For Levinas, the ethically hypostasised self does not rest on the need to be proved because it is in itself just as a person is in his or her skin.[91] In other words, the moral self relates to itself as a heart or a responsibility for others. In my reading, Levinas calls this a "shudder of incarnation" because it is a trauma for the self not to give primacy to itself.

Given that the self is in a dissymmetrical relation with the Other, does this not speak of incarnation as disincarnation?[92] This speaks of the priority of having the Other in oneself (the very incarnation of otherness). But what does this say about the relation with God? In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes, "The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he [God] is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed".[93] Later in *Otherwise than Being*, the idea of incarnation as disincarnation is expressed in different terms as the proximity of the neighbour and the non-phenomenality of the face.[94] It seems to me that the sense Levinas gives to disincarnation is to point to God's non-phenomenality in the Other's face and how it is manifested as otherness. When Levinas writes that, "... the I is an other,"[95] it appears he is emphasising also that the I is commanded to be like God, disincarnate (a non-phenomenal phenomenon) in the Other and signifying a life of sacrifice. We find here that the phenomenon of God's revelation in the face of the Other is not objective and not reducible to representation, but is however signified in the form of incarnation, that is, of substituting for the Other.

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[90] See Chapter Two, p.47.
[91] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 102-109 and Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 85.
[92] See Chapter Two, pp.34-35.
[93] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 79.
[94] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 89.
[95] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 92.

The idea of incarnation as disincarnation is inherently obscure. Neither Ward nor Derrida attempt to clarify it among Levinas' messianic terms of the self as a likeness of God or in regards to his ethical metaphysical conception that the ego is beyond essence.[96] As early as "Violence and Metaphysics," Derrida had criticised Levinas for refusing "to acknowledge an intentional modification of the ego," that is that the Other is an intentional phenomenon and hence appears in the same zone as the self.[97] In the process of investigating Derrida's claim, Ward also seems to hold the view that there is an intentional modification of the ego in Levinas' thought. This is to suggest that Levinas' thought does not go beyond phenomenology. Pursuing this reasoning, Ward appeals to Derrida's clarification of Levinas' notion of incarnation as disincarnation: "'the wholly other ... negotiates the non-negotiable by means of a context, negotiates its economy as the other'".[98] Here, Ward seems to favour Derrida's interpretation, namely, that the economy (alterity) of the Other depends on the context of representation.

Furthermore, in his reading of Levinas, Ward emphasises that, "The Other is recognized as an analogy of apperception by the Ego".[99] It would appear, though, that he has overlooked Levinas' development of phenomenology in *Otherwise than Being*. For example, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas points out: "The effort of the book is directed toward apperceiving in discourse a non-allergic relation with alterity ...".[100] This seems to parallel Ward's characterisation of Levinas' thought. However, later in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas conceives of diachrony as that which ruptures the unity of transcendental apperception and of the idea of infinity as that which is beyond the unity of transcendental apperception.[101] Together, these complex ideas of diachrony[102] and infinity[103] signify a sense of transcendence beyond essence. For the self, this means that its giving of responsibility for the Other retains a trace of the Infinite, that is, an anarchic

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[96] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 90.
[97] See Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 156.
[98] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of the Theology*, 152-153. Ward's quotation of Derrida is from Jacques Derrida, *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (paris: Editions Galilée, 1987), 160.
[99] Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of the Theology*, 152.
[100] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 47.
[101] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 151-152.
[102] See Chapter Two, pp.32-33.
[103] See Chapter Two, pp. 40-41, 55.

obligation to be infinitely responsible for the Other.[104] In my judgment, Ward's emphasis on Levinas' earlier writings is an indication of the difficulty of interpreting him beyond analogical conceptualisations.

In contrast to both Ward and Derrida, I hold the view that Levinas' idea of incarnation in its later development signifies a context beyond the limits of phenomenology. Levinas refers to a context where the meaning of language is found and where the overwhelming event of the word "God" takes place before all theology.[105] This is the context that speaks of the subject's incarnation of otherness. In other words, for the subject to withdraw to its secret identity of alterity testifies to the unknowable, namely the Infinite. Levinas indicates a non-phenomenal context when he states: "The subject as a hostage has been neither the experience nor the proof of the Infinite, but a witness borne of the Infinite, a modality of this glory, a testimony that no disclosure has preceded".[106] The notion of a subject as a hostage[107] is made without reference to presence. Accordingly, the subject giving testimony (bearing the weight of being responsible for everyone) is signified in the name of God. Levinas describes the context of such testimony as recurrence. Moreover, recurrence is the possibility for the word "God" to be pronounced without experience or proof of God's divinity.[108]

I have already pointed out that recurrence, the contraction of the self to its ever increasing responsibility, is described as a shudder of incarnation. The Levinasian sense of incarnation expresses the way in which God's word is communicated in a context beyond representation and ontology. I have arrived at this conclusion by examining Levinas' description of incarnation in relation to his reflections on exposedness, maternity, having a heart, recurrence, *ipseity*, ethical hypostasis, the hither side and also to disincarnation (God's non-phenomenality). The common factor that these senses of incarnation articulate is the encounter with otherness (the trace of *illeity*). Following this conclusion, the question remains how the Levinasian idea of incarnation as the encounter with

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[104] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 151-153.
[105] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 151
[106] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 169.
[107] See Chapter Two, pp.36, 46, 58, 61.
[108] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 149, 162.

otherness might serve to open von Balthasar's treatment of Christ's person and mission in Trinitarian Inversion.

Levinas' idea of incarnation brings with it a non-phenomenal context. It is not necessarily in contradiction to von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology on this point. For example, his treatment of Trinitarian Inversion examines the non-phenomenal or immanent Trinity, and how it has its economic form. However, the difference is that von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory is based upon situating God in the category of Being. For example in the context of describing the triune God's role in the theo-drama, he states: "Being, in its hierarchical stages and degrees of interiority (existence, life, feeling, thinking and loving) simply cannot be anything but a trace, an image, of eternal Being...".[109] In contrast, Levinas' thought emphasises God as unrepresentable and non-thematisable by constructing an ethical metaphysics. In other words, if there is any sense to be made of God, such wisdom must pass through service for the neighbour.[110] It is my argument that Levinas' non-phenomenal context offers to von Balthasar's theology a new set of tools to shape the notion of Trinitarian Inversion beyond the language of totality.

Let us now consider von Balthasar's description of the action of the Spirit with a view of developing it along Levinasian lines. In the following reflection, von Balthasar speaks of the Spirit's inversion in terms of objective propositions of God's Being. He states:

> For reasons of salvation history, however, this spiration has to go into hiding, as it were, behind the Spirit's *second aspect.* Here the Spirit takes over the function of presenting the obedient Son with the Father's will in the form of a *rule* that is unconditional and, in the case of the Son's suffering, even appears rigid and pitiless. ... It is as if the Spirit, now embodied in a form of a rule, says to them both: This is what you have wanted from all eternity; this is what, from all eternity, we have determined.[111]

There is a sense that the Spirit, although non-phenomenal, is seen as an experience of a rule. Furthermore, the Spirit is explained as a phenomenon, an appearance or embodiment

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[109] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 525.
[110] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.
[111] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.

of a rigid and pitiless rule. It is then comprehended (thematised) as the Trinity's eternal, salvific plan. This description of the Spirit's action as rule falls short; it does not do justice to the non-phenomenal context upon which the whole action is based. Von Balthasar's theology of the Spirit is polarised according to human conceptions of consciousness and objectivity. The problem is that he assumes that the Father's and Son's experience of the Spirit's presence (embodiment in a form of a rule), can be thematised as an essence. Thus, for example, von Balthasar will describe Jesus' person as his "I-consciousness" and his mission and his "mission-consciousness".[112] But, can Jesus' person and mission other than by reference to consciousness of an essence? Levinas here suggests an answer.

The search for the context begins with the Levinasian ideas of exposure, the ethical inversion of the ego, and maternity, the gestation of the Other in the moral self. I would consider that Levinas' idea of exposure and maternity, rather than intentional consciousness, to be of central importance. Let us begin, then, with a theological application of Levinasian "maternity".

Christ's I-Maternity

Von Balthasar the idea of sexual difference contains not only the complementarity of men and women, their separation from God, and their being an image of the Trinity's inner-divine life, but also an order: "both are created by God, but the woman is made from the man".[113] Although this order is based upon a literal interpretation of Scripture (Gen 2:21-23), it nevertheless can suggest woman's subordination to man. Furthermore, von Balthasar parallels the sexual difference with Christ and the mystical body of the Church. The Church is therefore described as "Christ's 'helpmate' in his work; when he is no longer on earth as an historical person, she will represent him and continue his work".[114] Further, von Balthasar's Mariology approaches the male/female polarity through a single

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[112] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187.
[113] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 340 and Gardner and Moss, "Something like Time; Something like the Sexes," 99.
[114] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 341.

principle of secondary duality, where the woman's essence is dependent upon the man's word and look.[115] By developing a sense of Christ's person as "I-maternity", an ethical complementarity between man and woman in Christ might be achieved, and a more contemporary theology be developed, more sensitive to at least Western cultural experience.

Levinas' idea of maternity expresses an awareness of subjectivity beyond experience and knowledge. It implies responsibility for others even to the extent of bearing responsibility for the persecutor's abuse. Maternity speaks of an incarnation of otherness in which the subject exists beyond the totality of its lived experience.[116] This sense of incarnation specifically refers to being bound to others before being tied to one's own body. Levinas therefore parallels the feminine image of maternity with bearing responsibility for the Other and characterises it as the pre-ontological and non-thematisable responsibility of a subject. This conception suggests that maternity is before and beyond the limits of self-consciousness. To describe the identity of an I in relation to consciousness in the sphere of Being is more to suggest that the I is the origin of itself. However, for Levinas, the I is more pre-original; it rests on bearing responsibility for others rather than on itself.[117] In other words, the I is anarchic (without origin), belonging to an immemorial past of having been obliged to be responsible. In this regard, Levinas writes: "... an irrecuperable pre-ontological past, that of maternity. It is a plot which cannot be subordinated to the vicissitudes of representation and knowledge, openness upon images, or an exchange of information".[118]

The analysis so far expresses a sense of maternity as that which is beyond essence. It signifies an immemorial past of having been obliged to bear responsibility for others. Now, in relation to conceiving of Christ's person *in* God and *as* God (*processio*) as "I-maternity," this idea can give a new perspective of how the Son since time immemorial is

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[115] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 292 and Gardner and Moss, "Something like Time; Something like the Sexes," 98. Gardner and Moss point out that von Balthasar had frequently denied any implied inferiority in the character of the woman.
[116] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 76-79.
[117] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 75-79.
[118] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 78-79.

God, and is with the Father in the Spirit. I would suggest that the doctrine of eternal Sonship bespeaks more of an infinity of responsibility for the Father. The Trinity's inner divine life must be expressed in terms of alterity rather than essence. Further, the idea of Christ's I-maternity signifies Christ's person, in God and as God, as substitution for others *par excellence*. For example, the Son substitutes for the Father rather than in himself being conscious of his essence as the Father's Son. The Son is therefore beyond essence as a divine hypostasis focused infinitely upon doing the Father's will in the Spirit.

So far, I have set out to argue that the Son's procession signifies maternity, an infinite bearing of responsibility beyond essence. Let us look more closely at this sense of beyond essence. It stresses the Son's recourse to his pre-original past of alterity: within divine paternity (the Son being begotten by the Father) there is maternity (the Son gestating alterity). This Levinasian approach throws light on the relation between the status of the Son as a person *in* God and his personal status *as* God. The relationship in question points to a union of the masculine (paternity) with the feminine (maternity). This point can be extended: the divine person of the Son is *in* God infinitely bearing the Father's will, and *as* God beyond essence and the experience of it in consciousness. This can assist in a deeper reading of von Balthasar's treatment of the feminine in God: "The Old Covenant spoke of God's 'bowels' (*rachamim*) trembling with compassionate love: this is precisely what is revealed to the world when the Father surrenders all his love, embodied in the Son".[119] Along Levinasian lines, we could conceive that the Son's maternity within God gestates compassionate love in the world. This is a drama beyond representation and knowledge as Christ's subjectivity is always one of being bound to others since time immemorial.

The idea of Christ's "I-maternity" can also be applied to von Balthasar's idea of the sexual difference ("the bifurcation of the sexes"[120]) as a likeness of the divine life of the Trinity. He states: "... the fact that the creature is 'over against God' is itself an image of the divine life within the Trinity (in the opposition of hypostases); this imparts a new

[119] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 519.
[120] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 340.

dimension of the significance to the man/woman polarity".[121] There are three ways in which von Balthasar's thinking on this theme can be developed further:

- First, I propose that the sexual difference be articulated by the woman's gestation of alterity over against the man rather than articulating the sexual difference with its inherent view of woman's subordination to man. This suggests that the woman is the force by which man finds his identity of alterity. Such an approach opens the way to a less "gender-biased" understanding of the divine life of the Trinity.

- Second, just as the Son proceeds the Father and bears responsibility, so similarly, out of the man comes the woman gestating alterity in her love for the man. As a result, together man and woman signify the image and likeness of God in human form.

- Third, just as the Son is eternally with the Father, so the woman has always been with the man since the time of Creation.

From these three points of view, the biblical idea of woman being made from man (Gen 2:21-23) in no way points to her subordination by man; woman rather signifies that humanity is first an encounter with alterity, peace and mercy. These reflections, I suggest, might help to overcome the dangers involved in von Balthasar's search to define the essence of woman in her encounter with the man.[122]

Furthermore, the idea of Christ's "I-maternity" offers a new twist to the Trinitarian doctrine of *perichoresis*. We can conceive the three divine persons indwelling one another in an act of self-dispossession for the sake of the other. As each divine person is overwhelmed by the other, each exists beyond its own essence. *Perichoresis*, therefore, is like a mutual, maternal bearing of alterity where each divine person transcends its own essence in order to pass over to the other.

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[121] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 340.
[122] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 292.

So far I have been exploring how Levinas' idea of maternity (drawn from his conception of incarnation) in various ways might enrich von Balthasar's theology. On the basis of developing the notion of Christ's "I-maternity" to signify Christ's person *in* God and *as* God (*processio*), I have tried to show that such maternal aspects within the triune Godhead signify alterity (the priority of being other-centred) without reference to essence (the *conatus* of beings) and consciousness (the access to essence).

Now, let us examine von Balthasar's understanding of Christ's mission from an ethical metaphysical perspective.

The Exposure of Christ's Mission

Disinterestedness as incarnation is an entry point into Levinasian ethical metaphysics. It is allied to the complex notion of "exposure". Here, I note the following four aspects:

- First, exposure is the inversion of the ego's identity, from being for-oneself to being for-the-other. Here, the self pushes its ego-identity to the limit, to the point of suffering for the Other.[123] Levinas describes this as the recurrence to oneself, that is to say, the self contracting to its secret identity of alterity. He writes: "The recurrence of ipseity, the incarnation, far from thickening and tumefying the soul, oppresses it and contracts it and exposes it naked to the other to the point of making the subject expose its very exposedness ...".[124]
- Second, exposure points to the very possibility of giving up one's self for another. Specifically, Levinas is referring to a life of devoting oneself to the Other in spite of having the adversity of suffering ("an exposedness always to be exposed the more").[125]
- Third, exposure refers to a subjectivity of extreme passivity ("a passivity more passive than any passivity"); the self is kept from being for-itself.[126]
- Lastly, exposure signifies a state beyond self-consciousness and cognition of essences. Levinas states: "... The neighbour excludes himself from the thought that seeks him, and

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[123] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 121.
[124] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 109.
[125] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 50-51.
[126] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 50.

this exclusion has a positive side to it; my exposure to him, antecedent to his appearing, my delay behind him, my undergoing, undo the core of what is identity in me".[127] This suggests that responsibility for another does not come from any represented present, but from a time with no beginning, no history and no memory. For Levinas, such exposure is the sense of the non-phenomenal, an anarchic obligation to be responsible commanded by the Other's face.[128]

These four senses of exposure taken together form a non-phenomenal context for an alternative to understanding the Good compared to von Balthasar's transcendental approach. I would contend that a non-phenomenal development of the good would help to enrich von Balthasar's theo-drama with the language of alterity. If we replace von Balthasar's idea of Christ's consciousness of his mission with a sense of his mission as "exposure", a richer non-phenomenal context emerges. It helps to bring out the correlation of the Trinity's eternal salvific plan with the incarnate Son's self-giving mission.

Take, for instance, the Spirit's active role in the Son's humanity. We can see that this contrasts with the Son's hyperbolic passivity in regard to the Father's will. The consequence of this activity led to exposure, in the sense explained. Hence, Christ is continually directed by the Spirit to be exposed more and more to sin, to the point of laying down his life for the world. In this way, Christ's human existence is overwhelmed by others to such an extent that the Spirit inverts the temptation to be for-himself (cf. Matt 4:1) to suffering and dying for humanity. If we are to make sense of Christ's suffering, we must discover it in his expiation he offers on behalf of all. To take this non-phenomenal analysis of mission in terms of "exposure" further, Christ's kenotic state is not only activity, but also an extreme passivity towards doing the Father's will. This passivity can never be represented in the present, for, like the filial relationship between the Father and Son in the immanent Trinity, it is an overwhelming and hyperbolic reality that Christ's human consciousness cannot contain. As a result, the Spirit's operation of

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[127] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 89.
[128] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 89.

the Son's humanity acts in such a way to veil divinity from him lest the incarnate Son himself be tempted by the magnitude of his Being and lose his humanity. Simply possessing knowledge of divinity and its profundity does not initiate salvation. This can only occur by being exposed to others beyond one's own limits of suffering, giving and trauma.

Now the task remains to develop how Christ's *processio* as "I-maternity" is identical with his *missio* as "the exposure of mission". For von Balthasar, the identical nature of Christ's *processio* and *missio* (or the Father's and Son's economic spiration of the Spirit) is a given. However, through the Spirit's operation of the Son's humanity (Trinitarian Inversion), Christ's *processio* must be veiled from his *missio* for reasons of salvation history.[129] To develop this understanding, I have adopted the Levinasian ideas of maternity and exposedness. Together, they can offer a non-phenomenal context to describe how Christ's *processio* and *missio* are identical. Let us tease this out further.

Both the Levinasian ideas of maternity and exposure describe different aspects of the encounter with otherness outside consciousness. In maternity, the subject gestates otherness to the point of being bound to others before being tied to his/her own body. Through the exposure of being for-the-other, the subject transcends his/her own limits of suffering, giving and trauma. However together, both the ideas of maternity and exposure create a non-phenomenal context to describe a subject's identity, namely the subject is an Other or, in other words, an incarnation of otherness.

I suggest that developing the sense of Christ's identity as an incarnation of otherness will help to overcome the limits imposed by phenomenology and ontology. This is to say that Christ's identity is not subject to experience, knowledge, explanations and proof. Rather, Christ's *processio* ("I-maternity") is identical with his *missio* ("the exposure of mission") in that they both signify an incarnation of otherness, that is, giving to the Other priority of one's life. Both aspects interpenetrate. For example, the Incarnate Son, living beyond the limits of human giving, suffering and trauma ("the exposure of mission"), bears

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[129] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.

responsibility for the Father's will as a person *in* God and *as* God ("I-maternity"). In the Incarnation, the Spirit must veil divinity from the Son so that his mission is the breakthrough of the eternal, triune plan into the realm of humanity. The effect of Trinitarian Inversion, therefore, is to produce the Son's humanity without letting his divinity be contaminated by experience, knowledge, explanations and proof. On the basis of Levinas' two ideas of maternity and exposure, we have now reached a non-phenomenal context to describe how Christ's *processio* and *missio* are identical. The context has sought to put into question phenomenology and ontology as the foundations for von Balthasar's theo-dramatic theory.

Gift-as-Given and Gift-as-Received

Earlier in the chapter, I introduced von Balthasar's two-fold sense of gift in relation to the idea of difference or kenosis within the Trinity. I had shown that the gift-as-given expresses the Father's generation of the Son, and that the gift-as-received is enacted in the Son's thanksgiving and openness towards the Father. The Holy Spirit operates the distinction and union of the Father and the Son in their polar aspects of the gift. I stress a possible parallel between the two theological themes of Christ's *processio* and *missio*, and gift-as-given and gift-as-received. Specifically, on the one hand the themes of gift-as-given and Christ's *processio* share the common ground of the Son's generation. On the other hand, the themes of gift-as-received and Christ's *missio* share the common ground of kenosis, obedience and thanksgiving. Both parallels point to the union of love between the Father and Son in the Spirit.[130]

By developing von Balthasar's understanding of gift-as-given and gift-as-received, we can come to a deeper insight into the mystery of Christ's *processio* and *missio* in Trinitarian Inversion. Specifically, I wish to give a post-phenomenological view of why the Spirit must veil Christ's divinity from his earthly mission. On this point, von Balthasar is rather vague: "For reasons of salvation history, however, this spiration has to go into hiding behind the Spirit's *second aspect*".[131] We will try to take the matter further.

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[130] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV.*, 326.
[131] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.

Omnipotence and Powerlessness "as such"

Let us begin by developing the theological theme of gift-as-given and gift-as-received in the context of von Balthasar's conception of Trinitarian Inversion. Previously, in my earlier discussion on von Balthasar's theology of gift, I had come to the conclusion that his idea of gift not only depends upon the unity of kenotic otherness and God's Being, but also upon the fact that the gift finds its phenomenality in suffering. With a view to stretching the limits of phenomenology, I will now look at von Balthasar's conception of omnipotence and powerlessness *as such*. This will help to clarify the connection between the two aspects of gift and suffering from a Levinasian perspective.

In von Balthasar's "Dramatic Soteriology",[132] there is an isolated passage where he speaks of Trinitarian Inversion and the omnipotence and powerlessness of the gift. It is found in the midst of his reflection upon the Son's willingness to carry out the mission given to him by the Father:

> But because, in the economy of salvation, the trinitarian decision can only be carried out by the Father making the divine will known to the incarnate Son through the Holy Spirit (in the "trinitarian inversion", cf. *Theo-Drama* III, 183ff.), the impression is given that the Father – *cooperante Spiritu Sanctu* – loads the Son with the sins of the world (to the annoyance of all Anselm's opponents). However, as Thomas rightly says, it is not a question of God overpowering either the Suffering Son or vanquishing worldly powers, but of that powerlessness that is indivisible from the divine omnipotence. *As such*, because it is God's truth and righteousness, this powerlessness is more powerful than all worldly power.[133]

It is surprising that this is the only passage in von Balthasar's Dramatic Soteriology which refers to Trinitarian Inversion in relation to divine self-giving and suffering. But, it is more surprising, as I will argue later, that the idea of Trinitarian Inversion hardly touches upon divine self-giving and suffering. Nevertheless, the passage above is significant because it brings out not only von Balthasar's allegiance to phenomenology and ontology, but also that his conception of Trinitarian Inversion could have received more attention. Let us look at his attempt to conceive of the transcendental knowledge of God's Being. When von Balthasar stresses the indivisible unity between omnipotence

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[132] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 317-426.
[133] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 335.

and powerlessness, he is speaking of the correspondence between the Father's self-giving (gift-as-given) and the Son's thanksgiving and readiness (gift-as-received).[134] The passage indicates that the Spirit's active role in the operation of the Son's humanity (Trinitarian Inversion) is to make the omnipotence and powerlessness of God's love *as such* interpenetrate Christ's mission. Given that "as such" is a difficult term to clarify, let us turn to Heidegger's *Being and Time* for insight into its possible meaning.

For Heidegger, "as such" is a phenomenological description of the Being of a thing (entity or essence) that is in itself (*an sich*). In other words, the thing as such/in itself can refer to either a substance (entity) or substantiality (essence).[135] In *Being and Time*, "an sich" is usually translated as 'in itself,' especially in regards to Heidegger's conception of 'Being-in-itself' (*An-sich-Sein*).[136] However, there is one instance where it is clear that "an sich" refers to not only "in itself", but also to "as such". This instance is found when Heidegger asks, "How is it all possible to grasp a substance as such, that is, to grasp its substantiality?"[137]

Von Balthasar's uses the term, "as such", to describe God's essence as it is "in itself".[138] I observe that this is also the viewpoint of Nichols. For example, he gives a translation of von Balthasar's *Theologik, Vol.I*, 11: "Truth is not just a property of knowledge, it is above all a transcendental determination of being as such," and then states in his own words, "Crucial to *Theologik*, then, will be the character of being-itself". The point I wish to stress is that God's "powerlessness that is indivisible from his divine omnipotence" is conceived like the transcendentals, that is, as mutually immanent qualities of God's Being "as such". For example, in the same way that the transcendentals of the beautiful, the good and the true can never be exhausted by any human definition, so God's powerlessness is more powerful than all worldly power.[139] It

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[134] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 326.
[135] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 123.
[136] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 106.
[137] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 123.
[138] See Nichols, *Say It Is Pentecost*, 9.
[139] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 15.

is likely that this objective proposition of God's essence gives an all-pervasive character to God's Being to the extent of going beyond human concepts.

But von Balthasar is also guided by the quest to comprehend God's Being. This is the point where I suggest he does not overcome the difficulty between making objective representations of God and that God ultimately can never be known "as such". It seems to me that von Balthasar's use of ontology in his theo-dramatic theory cannot sufficiently allow him to describe and explain how God exhausts human understanding. For example, when von Balthasar defines Christ's person "... in ontological terms: his conscious subject is identical with his divine mission,"[140] there is, in contrast, another avenue to approach Christ's person and the Trinity, a way that leads us towards the limits of phenomenology.

It is apparent that von Balthasar treats of the transcendental qualities of God's Being"as such". When he explains the indivisible unity between omnipotence and powerlessness with the phrase, "as such", it must also follow that the correspondence between the Father's self-giving (gift-as-given) and the Son's thanksgiving and readiness (gift-as-received) is conceived in the same manner. Moreover, the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness identifies the drama (kenotic difference and *perichoresis*) within the gift: the distinction between the Father's self-giving and the Son's thanksgiving and readiness, and also importantly, their realised union of love within the distinction.[141] Here, it becomes clear that the gift "as such" can be likened to the philosophical transcendentals of the beautiful, the good and the true. In short, the gift has the quality of being itself or of being interrelated with Being.

By referring to von Balthasar's ontological and phenomenal context, I am suggesting that his theology seems to comprehend the object of God's revelation in Christ by describing it as a phenomenon "as such". This is despite the very fact that God's revelation is ultimately beyond thought, a position which von Balthasar himself holds. He states: "Of

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[140] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 505.
[141] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 326.

course, the ultimate ground of the mysterious character inherent in the knowable is disclosed only when we recognise that every possible object of knowledge is creaturely, in other words, that its ultimate truth lies hidden in the mind of the Creator, who alone can speak the eternal name of things".[142] Even though von Balthasar is aware that it is God alone who can truly speak about divinity, he assumes that the idea of a God-Man safeguards the transcendental qualities of God's Being from all the ruin that human freedom might cause.[143]

We can now begin to understand why von Balthasar points to the unity between omnipotence and powerlessness "as such" in relation to divine self-giving. The incarnate Son, having received the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness from the Father, reveals God "as such" to humanity because he can give all to the Father (omnipotence) and, at the same time shows, by going to the limit of forgiveness, that nothing is as truly powerful as this gift (powerlessness). Accordingly, the Son reveals "God *as God*"[144] to humanity. This is conceivable because the Son's gift of consubstantial divinity with the Father (*processio*) is identical with his willingness to do the Father's will (*missio*). In other words, the Father's self-giving in generation is prolonged through Trinitarian Inversion as the Son's mission in the world. At this point, we now approach an opening to study the connection between divine self-giving and divine suffering.

Divine Self-Giving and Suffering

For von Balthasar, the action of the Holy Spirit gives the Father complete freedom over Christ's mission.[145] However, it is a freedom that develops into suffering on two contrasting levels according to his Dramatic Soteriology. On the first, when the Father recklessly gives all away without regard for himself, he encounters a freedom that changes into "a calculating, cautious self-preservation".[146] Second, the Son, accompanied by the Spirit, allows his own life to be squandered. The two levels emphasise that God

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[142] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 17.
[143] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 17.
[144] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 326 and von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 17.
[145] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 522.
[146] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 328.

both suffers and will not suffer humanity's refusal of divine love. Also specifically both extremes exemplify the Trinitarian recklessness of divine love, namely that the Father must send his Son to the world to suffer and die, and also that the Son and Spirit must give themselves to fulfil the Father's will.[147]

Von Balthasar also comprehends the phenomenon of God's suffering in reference to the unity between powerlessness and omnipotence. He describes that the Father, because of his omnipotence, has the power to give all to the Son. But because nothing is as powerful as this gift of consubstantial divinity, it is also a powerlessness or fundamental vulnerability to endure humanity's refusal of divine love. Providing a more helpful approach, von Balthasar points out that because God's powerlessness is identical with God's omnipotence, God is beyond the necessity to dominate human freedom; God does not overwhelm, but guides humanity in its goals.[148] It becomes evident that von Balthasar uses the conception of the unity between omnipotence and powerlessness as a means to express how God both suffers and will not suffer humanity's refusal of divine love. As omnipotent, God the Father is freed from suffering. However, God's powerlessness (which must not be separated from his omnipotence) allows God to suffer the perversion of humanity's freedom by locating it within the Son's ultimate self-surrender to the Father's will. It would seem that von Balthasar's Dramatic Soteriology thematises Trinitarian suffering in the Incarnate Son:

> It is irrelevant to suggest that the Father's generation of the Son involves no risk and is therefore 'undramatic': a world that is full of risks can only be created within the Son's *processio* (prolonged as *missio*); this shows that every 'risk' on God's part is undergirded by, and enabled by, the powerless power of divine self-giving. ... there is something in God that can develop into suffering.[149]

Von Balthasar's analysis of the unity between omnipotence and powerlessness "as such" (transcendental-like qualities of God's Being) provides the proof for the drama of divine self-giving and suffering. Furthermore, it seems to me that von Balthasar has missed an

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[147] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 328-329.
[148] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 326-331.
[149] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 327-328.

opportunity to develop the ideas of divine self-giving and suffering through the conception of Trinitarian Inversion. Such a development could have given rise to another perspective in Dramatic Soteriology, namely how the incarnate Son is the triune face of divine self-giving and suffering. In my reading, von Balthasar gives scant attention[150] to divine self-giving and suffering in Trinitarian Inversion because of his tendency to thematise the phenomenon of God's revelation in Christ. In other words, God's essence is subverted into the totality of human experience and thought producing complex explanations of how God is good or true. For example, in Trinitarian Inversion he points out that the eternal salvific plan of the Trinity can only be carried out by the Father making his will *known* to the incarnate Son through the Spirit.[151] Further, von Balthasar describes the Spirit's role in the Incarnation as the action that unites Christ's mission with the Father's gift of Being, namely omnipotence and powerlessness "as such".[152]

God, Theology and the Limits of Phenomenology

It might appear that von Balthasar uses ontology and phenomenology in his theological dramatic theory to articulate God's divinity in terms of presence or transcendental knowledge. In contrast, I would consider that Levinas' idea of having a sense in Being[153] (the very gift of oneself for another) offers an opening to allow the Creator alone to speak the eternal name of things. This would entail developing an understanding of God as gift without letting God's divinity be thematised and manifested as a continuous presence in consciousness. Levinas' conception of the work of justice[154] offers a context "to hear a God not contaminated by Being"[155] in the drama of Trinitarian Inversion. However, the context is ambiguous for three reasons. First, it retains the trace of *illeity* ("the *he* in the depth of the you"[156]), an idea that points to the possibility for God to be confused with the

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[150] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 187-188. The scant attention von Balthasar gives to the ideas of divine self-giving and suffering in Trinitarian Inversion is to describe that the Son's and Spirit's self-offering (in the triune decision of sending the Son to the world) must have cost the Father in the same way as the Son's fulfilment of his mission in the Spirit.
[151] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 335.
[152] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 335.
[153] See Chapter Two, pp.56-57.
[154] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 160.
[155] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, xlviii.
[156] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165.

stirrings of the *there is* or the horror of Being.[157] Second, it emphasises that the offer of self is possible through having a sense of transcendence in Being, a sense that overwhelms cognition with disinterestedness. Third, the context always involves the risk of betraying God's transcendence to Being, presence and objectivity. For Levinas, to conceive such ambivalence is a risk that philosophy is called upon to make.[158] But, this is also the risk that theology must dare to take so that God's word might be heard in the production of justice and peace. Even though Levinas is averse to speaking theologically, I would suggest that his post-phenomenology[159] offers a way to indeed theologise with the language of alterity, albeit at a risk of betraying God to ego-consciousness.

The question that must concern us now is whether anything can actually be "said" of God if there is always the possibility of confusing God with the presence of thought. In response, it would be helpful to take a closer look at Trinitarian Inversion. Von Balthasar writes:

> In the Passion, the Father's loving countenance can disappear behind the hard facts of what must be: now, more than ever, this is very much a part of the Trinity's eternal plan laid before him by the Spirit, the witness of the mutual will of Father and Son. It is as if the Spirit, now embodied in the form of a rule, says to them both: This is what you have wanted from all eternity; this is what, from all eternity, we have determined![160]

The passage provides a starting point to engage theology with Levinas' idea of having a sense in Being. The idea emphasises that alterity (the gift of self) is present in justice and at a price of risking it to thought. Further, it exemplifies that it is possible to be conscious of something without reducing the object to representation. We are now in a position to theologise and conceive the ambivalence in which the triune gift is revealed by way of a Trinitarian Inversion during Jesus' earthly mission. First, I suggest that Levinas' idea of the gift of self brings to light a context of alterity in the Spirit's production of the Son's humanity. In this regard, the Spirit, like the indirect ways of *illeity*, is an imposing

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[157] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.
[158] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162. For example, Levinas writes: "Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love".
[159] See Chapter Two, p.32.
[160] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III*, 188.

'sense' upon Jesus' earthly mission as well as a commanding sense for the Father to give his Son to the world. In the Passion, then, Christ becomes conscious of the Father's will (Jn 17:1-5) through the Spirit giving Christ a sense of what has been determined from all eternity. Christ cannot prove or explain the Trinity's eternal plan. Through the Spirit, his consciousness transcends itself towards the Father's will. As a result, Christ's act of sacrifice has a sense which can never be contained by knowledge and lived experience. Accordingly, the act of sacrifice, the very "madness" of the Cross, signifies *par excellence* that Christ has heard humanity's suffering and cry for justice.

We can go further and discover how Christ has responded to the world's suffering and cry for justice. In the act of sacrifice on the Cross, Christ's movement towards God takes form through the action of the Holy Spirit. This commanding role of the Spirit enables Christ to have a sense in Being. Let us name this sense, kenosis. For Christ, the Passion presupposes kenosis because it is consciousness directed beyond itself towards expiating for the perversion of humanity's freedom. For humanity, we might add, Christ's self-giving in the Spirit is the basis for humanity to have a sense of salvation (or the Trinity's eternal salvific plan) in Being.

If we are to agree that Christ's gift of self in the Passion through the action of the Spirit is the basis for humanity to theologise about the Trinity, what then does this tell us about how to do theology? It points out that if the word "God" is to be pronounced and even risked to thematisation, then, there must be a response of kenotic love on our part, or in other words, a Trinitarian *Praxis*. For von Balthasar, the theo-drama is not limited to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It involves the world and humanity. He insists that, "The Church and ... all who believe and love" are called upon to become a theological person in Christ, a person in whom the triune God is manifested.[161] It follows that if there is something in God that develops into suffering, there must also be something in humanity that also results in suffering. In this regard, being a theological person requires suffering in Christ. The implication is that a theological person must encounter: the recklessness with which the Father has given himself; the recklessness with which the

[161] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. III.*, 527.

Son allows himself to be squandered; and also the recklessness of the Spirit who accompanies the Son.

I have begun to consider how the theological person as a gift of self might have a sense of Christ's kenosis or salvation in Being. I have noted that for Levinas, the self is already responsible for the Other before any presence to consciousness. This is because the Other's proximity is not reduced to the event of Being. Further, we are introduced here to a meaning of transcendence, namely the event of Being passing over to otherwise than Being (disinterestedness).[162] In other words, this is an awakening to a responsibility, reaching the point of substitution for the Other.[163] Accordingly, on the basis of such transcendence, Being has a just meaning or a sense that is not a finality.[164] This is so because the transcendence of the Other's proximity (or the indirect ways of *illeity*) imposes a consciousness that is still disinterestedness, namely, the presence of the third (the other Other, humanity and justice) beside the neighbour approached. As a result, the self as gift has a consciousness that transcends itself. In other words, the entry of the third gives rise to consciousness. This produces a space and time of transcendence in which justice is established with the help of God.[165] In my reading, Levinas' idea of having a sense in Being can be utilised to stretch von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology towards the limits of phenomenology, that is, to face the ambiguity of conceiving God, the non-thematisable, in an act of consciousness and upon a terrain in which the ethical self is always for the other.

We see here a beginning in which theology can pronounce the word "God" without reducing it to ego-consciousness. It follows that disinterestedness leads to thematisation and an act of consciousness with the help of God. This provides us with an opening to understand how the Spirit initiates the Trinity's eternal plan during the Son's Passion, and also how time and space exist for a theological person to participate in the Passion. It

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[162] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 3.
[163] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 164.
[164] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64, 122 and Charles E. Scott, "The Sense of Transcendence and the Question of Ethics," in Gary B. Madison and Marty Fairbairn, eds., *The Ethics of Postmodernity. Current Trends in Continental Thought* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 223-224.
[165] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 160.

seems to me that since "... the drama of the Passion ... embraces all past and future points of world time,"[166] the Passion is the very terrain which establishes God's justice and peace, and which enables a theological person to have a sense of kenosis in Being. Furthermore, the Trinitarian Inversion of the Spirit provokes Christ to have a sense of the eternal triune plan, a sense that is not reducible to experience and proof. Hence, even though Christ encounters the Father's withdrawal (Mt 27:46), it has not eliminated his sense of transcendence, namely that he is the Father's beloved Son (Mt 3:17). In the same way, Christ's kenosis of the Cross arises before thought or consciousness. Thus, having withdrawn from presence (since it overwhelms any attempt to reduce it to lived experience), Christ's kenosis arises in disinterestedness, that is to say in the responsibility for humanity's salvation. Such disinterestedness is the Spirit's action of commanding the eternal triune plan, the witness of the mutual will of Father and Son. But, it is also the terrain in which a theological person might seek justice and understand God.

Throughout this discussion, I have set out to resituate von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology to the extent of imagining what von Balthasar could have done with Levinas' post-phenomenology. God is beyond essence and experience. Indeed, the encounter with God is in the space and time of expiating responsibility. In such transcendence, God overflows thought leaving the self overwhelmed by a sense of ambiguity. This suggests that God is an enigma bursting human cognition with the face of the Other. Following this, it becomes clear that a kenotic form of Trinitarian *praxis* is an opening to theologise. Hence, theology must reflect the space and time that Christ's Passion opens up for all humanity. Such time and space speaks of a sense of being like Christ, a kenotic gift of self.[167] As a result, when a person does the work of justice, there is the possibility to have

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[166] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 363.

[167] For the basis of this idea of having as sense of transcendence in the withdrawal of transcendence, I am indebted to Scott's analysis of transcendence in Levinas' writings. For example, he writes: "... Levinas thinks that his thought arises from something more originary than either thought or consciousness. It arises ... from the 'facts' of responsibility, the face-to-face, the one-for-the-other. That is, they arise from something prior even to phenomena, from the already given testimony to the extreme difference of the other and the self's indebtedness to the other. Levinas's thought arises, I have said, from a withdrawal of transcendence that occurs in his sense of transcendence, a withdrawal richly prefigured in the Hebraic experience of the simultaneity of being a chosen people and of lacking immediate divine presence". See Scott, "The Sense of Transcendence and the Question of Ethics," 224-225. However, in spite of Scott's

theology concording with the language of alterity. But it is always done at a risk of betraying God to ego-consciousness and its idolatrous tendencies.

Conclusion: God as Gift, Self as Gift

Is it possible to hear the Creator alone speak the eternal name of things and still do theology? From the beginning of the previous section, (5.4 Gift-as-Given and Gift-as-Received) I have set out to develop von Balthasar's theology of gift to reach a deeper insight into the mystery of Christ's *processio* and *missio* in Trinitarian Inversion. This task was built upon using Levinas' two ideas of "maternity" and "exposure" to develop an understanding of Christ's *processio* and *missio* in a non-phenomenal context. Here, I replaced von Balthasar's terminology of "I-consciousness" and "mission-consciousness" with that of "I-maternity" and "the exposure of mission" respectively. I pointed out that both the Levinasian ideas of maternity and exposure emphasise different senses of the moral self's extreme passivity of responsibility towards the Other. Whereas maternity expresses the gestation of responsibility for others in the self, the idea of exposure referred to the inversion of the ego, from being for-oneself to being for-the-other. As both ideas held in common the sense of the self as an incarnation of otherness, this led to a non-phenomenal idea of gift, namely giving to the Other the priority of one's life.

Using Levinas' idea of gift (the self as gift to the Other), I looked at developing von Balthasar's understanding of gift-as-received and gift-as-given (the very unity between God's omnipotence and powerlessness). In this regard, I set out to challenge his description of it as phenomenological truth or transcendental knowledge. For von Balthasar, the qualities of God's Being (God's essence) are understood to be in an indissoluble unity "as such". This is to say that they can never be exhausted by any human definition as they ultimately go beyond human thought. Given his appreciation of the ultimate incomprehensibility of God's essence, it seemed to me that the theo-drama nevertheless reduces the thought of God to the language of totality.

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findings, it is astonishing that he did not clarify the idea of transcendence in reference to Levinas' idea of having a sense and to its later development in regards to "Being" and "the third".

By looking at Levinas' idea of having a sense in Being, that is, giving Being a just meaning through responsibility for the third (the other Other or humanity), I set out to conceive of God in terms of the idea of gift. However, such theologising faced ambiguity, namely having a sense of transcendence (disinterestedness or kenosis) despite the very fact of God's withdrawal from theoretical consciousness. Hence, by striving to be like Christ (a gift of self) in the space and time of his Passion, a theological person could have a sense of transcendence and possess the possibility to pronounce word "God" beyond the danger of ontological thematisations. Let us now look further at this possible danger in the context of von Balthasar's theo-drama.

According to von Balthasar, the Trinity's presence in the world-drama is not only in Christ, but also in the human person to the extent that he or she is assimilated to Christ through faith. Von Balthasar describes the Trinity's presence as an ontological change in the human person, from being a conscious subject to a person in Christ or theological person. The emphasis is on humanity becoming a dwelling place for the Trinity or of reaching its possibility to be elevated and transfigured to a point where the divine Archetype can be implanted.[168] I would suggest that such analysis reduces the idea of God's dramatic action in the world to a Heideggerian-like totality of discovering one's possibilities in life. This is because the presence of the Trinity in the world drama is thematised with the language of human experience, thought and care for its own possibilities. Even though von Balthasar stresses that the triune Being's presence is a trace in humanity's existence, life, feeling, thinking and loving,[169] we must try to resituate the Trinity beyond such ontological conceptualisations, that is, in the very space and time of Christ's Passion.

For von Balthasar, the Passion exemplifies *par excellence* how suffering in God reveals the dramatic interplay of Christ's *processio* and *missio* in the world. However in a context reaching beyond essence in the Levinasian sense, we could conceive further that the Spirit's operation of Christ's humanity in the Passion is an event (like "madness")

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[168] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 525-529.
[169] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol.III,* 525.

that overwhelms theoretical consciousness. By producing Christ's kenosis, the Spirit also gives rise to the triune gift of salvation in a space and time beyond essence. Such space and time speaks of Christ's suffering of being forsaken by God on the Cross. The implication of such suffering signifies the withdrawal of the Father's transcendence and also the incarnate Son's sense of transcendence in the Spirit. This gives rise to the possibility of a gift to be given. A gift can be given because Christ himself is not weighed down by the gravity of his divinity. Christ humbles himself and becomes obedient to the point of death (Phil 2:8) because he is the Gift. This is made possible due to the Spirit's active role producing the Son's humanity and veiling the Son's divinity. Hence, the Son is a gift of self for the world's salvation.

In an essay written in homage to Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion has spoken of the "as such" as rendering "oneself as an unsubstitutable other".[170] The sense here touches on a perspective that we wish to consider for the "as such", namely the incarnation of otherness or the irreplaceable nature of the self's responsibility for the Other. In this regard, we could perhaps suggest that the "as such" also refers to Christ's suffering through humanity and for humanity as the unique one. For example, in the time and space of the Passion, Christ "as such" (that is to say as an Other for all others) is the Gift, God, expiating and suffering. Unlike von Balthasar, I do not wish to conceive of the gift as a transcendental quality of God's Being, but as Christ's contraction of himself to the "hither side" of consciousness, the very space in time in which lies the Spirit's command of the mutual will of Father and Son. We can now conceive that Christ's *processio* is identical with his *missio* through the Spirit's action of giving Christ a sense of God, the Gift, in his earthly life. It is a sense that none the less permits the Spirit to veil Christ's divinity from his self-consciousness. This is necessary because any knowledge of being the divine Logos would have overwhelmed Christ's humanity. Thus, it is left to the Spirit to inspire the incarnate Son to do the Father's will.

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[170] For a Levinasian-inspired discussion of the *as such* and its connection with alterity and the gaze of the Other, see Jean-Luc Marion, "The Intentionality of Love," in *Prolegomena to Charity*, 100-101.

Furthermore, the self might begin to theologise if Christ "as such" lives in the self (Gal 2:20). This is where Christ's kenosis in the Spirit gnaws away at the self's identity, breaking up the temptation to reduce God, humanity and the world to an essence in consciousness. Given that Christ's kenosis turns consciousness away from itself, the Christocentric gift awakes the concordance of language and acts in the self. This is to say that the self, now a person in Christ, is an incarnation of otherness (an Other "as such"). I had asked at the beginning of the conclusion if it were possible to hear the Creator alone speak the eternal name of things and still do theology. It follows that if Christ provokes the self into a life of kenosis and into a consciousness irreducible to lived experience, space and time might exist to theologise of God/Gift with the language of alterity. I say "might" because there is always the temptation to pronounce the word "God" within the categories of objectivity, Being and presence. This entails that it is left to the action of the Spirit to inspire the theological person to be like Christ, humble and obedient to the point of expiation. Theology cannot be without a Christ-like life of kenosis in the Spirit, a very life that parallels Levinas' idea of disinterestedness. Chapter Six will explore this way of theologising in regard to developing the idea of Trinitarian *praxis*.

In coming to speak of the ideal of Trinitarian *praxis*, it has been a task full of complexity. I have engaged Levinas' idea of incarnation and its derived senses (the recurrence of *ipseity*, exposure, maternity and the self as gift) with von Balthasar's theological dramatic theory. At first glance, it might seem that these notions may in fact limit Trinitarian theology. This is especially the case where the sense of *ipseity* as tied to incarnation is not a biological concept.[171] This contrasts with the mystery of the Logos becoming flesh. However, by bringing out Levinas' non-phenomenal context of alterity, a development is possible. Indeed, he even allows that an ethical metaphysical view of the "Man-God" is possible. He states:

> On the one hand, the problem of the Man-God includes the idea of a self-inflicted humiliation on the part of the Supreme Being, of a descent of the Creator to the level of the Creature; that is to say, an absorption of the most active activity into the most passive passivity.

[171] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 87.

> On the other hand the problem includes, as if brought about by this passivity pushed to its ultimate degree in the Passion, the idea of expiation for others, that is, of a substitution. The identical par excellence, the noninterchangeable, the unique par excellence, would be substitution itself.[172]

In this reflection, Levinas attempts to understand whether the idea of a Man-God can be related to consciousness. For him, these ideas have philosophical value, especially as they point to the limits of phenomenology.[173] However, if we were to follow Levinas' stance of only seeking philosophical value from theological themes, then it would be impossible to theologise. Levinas' thought, by nature, limits or rejects theology. In contrast, I have tried to show in this chapter that theology like philosophy is called to risk the ambivalence of articulating God's Word without reducing it to presence. In the next chapter, I proceed to engage von Balthasar's theological logical theory with Levinas' thought in the hope of developing a prolegomena to a Trinitarian *praxis*.

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[172] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 53-54.

[173] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 54. Levinas writes, "These ideas, at first blush theological, overturn the categories of our representation".

Chapter 5 Von Balthasar's Theological Logical Theory

Introduction

The chapter examines von Balthasar's theological logical theory. It discusses his understanding of the role of truth in the event of God's revelation and compares it with those of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig to specify more accurately our Levinasian critique of von Balthasar's theo-logic. The chapter will then set out to recontextualise von Balthasar's idea of truth with the aid of a Levinasian ethical metaphysics, so that this theo-logic will give the ethical priority over the ontological.

Von Balthasar's theological logical theory (theo-logic) seeks to explain the connection between truth and revelation. It focuses specifically on one question: "What role does 'truth' play in the event of God's revelation through the Incarnation of the Logos and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?"[1] I begin this chapter by indicating four factors influencing von Balthasar's answer.

Being

First, it aims to understand the truth of Being. In von Balthasar's mind, the search for the truth of Being is the search for the ontological meaning of how God can become flesh, or alternatively how the creaturely *logos* can harbour its divine essence.[2] In proceeding with this search, von Balthasar studies truth in two parts. The first (*Theo-Logic, Vol. I*) investigates worldly (finite) truth as the object of philosophy. The second and final investigation of truth takes places through *Theo-Logic, Vol.'s II-III.* Truth is now the object of theology. These volumes are a theological inquiry into God's self-revelation in the incarnate Logos (*Vol. II*) and in God's Pneuma (*Vol. III*).[3]

Let us look more closely at *Vol. I, Truth of the World* as this will be the focus of the chapter. In this volume, he speaks of worldly truth as categorial revelation in the sense that we encounter truth in the world in a variety of forms or categories. In doing so, he divides *Theo-Logic, Vol. I* into four parts: Truth as Nature, Truth as Freedom, Truth as Mystery and Truth as Participation. These four categories of finite

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[1] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 7

[2] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 8.

[3] For an overview of the structure of Theo-Logic Vol.'s I-III, see Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 42-44 and John O'Donnell, "Truth as Love: the Understanding of Truth according to Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Pacifica* 1:2 (June, 1988), 193-195.

worldly truth are not mutually interdependent, hence, unlike the transcendentals in this regard.[4] However, because for Balthasar the world is embedded in the supernatural sphere of God's grace and revelation, the "Christian option"[5] is to accept the presence of God's grace and revelation at the centre of philosophical thinking. In other words, von Balthasar chooses to study the truth of worldly Being with the help of the doctrine of the transcendentals.[6]

But, there is another twist. While recognising that worldly phenomena contain divine elements, he focuses on human reason alone to describe the appearance of worldly truth without taking the position of whether such truth is grasped by natural or supernatural light. Here von Balthasar, in addressing the question of whether worldly truth is illumined by natural or supernatural elements, encounters an aporia, that is, a problem resistant to any logical solution, and demanding a decisive option. It would appear that *Vol. I* pursues a philosophical method at two levels. On one level it is matter of dividing worldly truth into four categories. On another level, von Balthasar wishes to speak of truth as a transcendental in relation to the other transcendental qualities of Being. On that presumption, *Vol. I* seeks to use natural or human reason to show that a philosophical route towards worldly truth eventually leads to a theological horizon.[7] The connection between human reason and God is at least a logical necessity in *Theo-Logic, Vol. I.* After all, von Balthasar emphasises that the supernatural permeates the deepest structures of Being and that it would be utter folly to divorce supernatural truth from philosophical inquiry.[8]

Analogy

We come now to the second factor guiding the question concerning the role of truth in the event of God's revelation. Both the analogy of Being and the analogy of the transcendentals appear to have their place. I have already spoken of these two fundamental analogies in the introduction to Chapter 3, regarding von Balthasar's trilogy as a whole. Here, I briefly recapitulate the major points. The analogy of Being points to the fact that between God and the creature there is greater

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[4] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 13, 15.
[5] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 31.
[6] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 30-31 and Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 42.
[7] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 31
[8] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 12, 31.

of something, Heidegger states that uncoveredness is uncoveredness of something.[14] Whereas Husserl speaks of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) as the structure of consciousness, Heidegger emphasises the passive sense of encounter (*Begegnen*), letting things be encountered in the world. In other words, uncovering something is encountering truth.[15] The idea of truth as unconcealment is not a quest for understanding things present-at-hand in the world, but a quest of understanding hidden things within the world based on the facticity of *Dasein* letting something be encountered in the world for the purposes of care for oneself and one's possibilities.[16]

Von Balthasar's conception of truth as unconcealment contains both Heideggerian and Husserlian elements. But there are two points of contrast. Heidegger's understanding of Being is finite. Furthermore, he rejects the Husserlian idea of lived experience as failing to provide enough ontological evidence for meaning and understanding.[17] This is because lived experiences destroy *Dasein*'s encounter with itself and with other entities as well as the way it understands itself and other entities in the world.[18] In contrast, von Balthasar will speak of God's infinite Being and takes the Husserlian position that lived experiences give meaning to the world. For example, his theo-logic speaks of consciousness in relation to the idea of truth as unconcealment. Yet in spite of these quite major differences, there are similarities. Von Balthasar takes from Heidegger the idea of *Dasein*'s having the identity of disclosedness, and of thereby uncovering things in the world as something disclosed. He writes, "Now, a being that can measure itself because it is unveiled to itself is called a 'subject'."[19] This, I suggest, could portray the identity of the subject in terms of its essence of care for its own Being-in-the-world.

But borrowing from Heidegger's conception of truth as unconcealment is not without danger. Heidegger's thought cannot provide the sense of transcendence that von Balthasar desires for the subject in its relation to God. If such a subject were to participate in the Infinite's light, I suggest it would seek to know God on the basis of

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[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 266.
[15] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176, 226, 268.
[16] Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 230 and Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176.
[17] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 226.
[18] Dorothea Frede, "The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project," in Guignon, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 56.
[19] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 43.

its act of consciousness permeated by Heideggerian care for itself or for what amounts to be the same thing, the very unconcealment of truth.

Accordingly, we can begin to appreciate how the theological development of the analogy of Being and the analogy of the transcendentals is influenced by philosophical ideas, especially those of Husserl and Heidegger. It seems to me that von Balthasar's idea of truth as unconcealment depends on explicating God's revelation as a presence in consciousness. His use of analogy plays an important role in theo-logic. He uses the analogy of Being and the analogy of the transcendentals to distinguish the presence of theologoumena from philosophical inquiry. For example, he states that the ontological unveiling of the subject before God is the proof that the truth of the world is true.[20] This implies the relation between God and the world expressed in the analogy of Being and the transcendentals. I wish to argue that the ontological foundation of God's revelation in the subject and the subject's response to God, is not, as he later judges, "the sole a priori of ethics".[21] Such a conception of ethics is undermined by von Balthasar's development of truth as unconcealment, a position that cannot completely extricate itself from the limitations of Heideggerian totality and Husserl's notion of presence.

Even though von Balthasar also speaks of the Hebrew term, *emeth* (trustworthiness, fidelity, constancy, reliability) as the second constitutive feature of truth, it is very close to the understanding of truth as unconcealment. For instance, von Balthasar describes *emeth* as, "... the un-closing and unsealing of a true infinity of fruitful possibilities and situations".[22] I have concluded that both the analogy of Being and the analogy of the transcendentals are influenced by the understanding of truth as unconcealment; and because of these Husserlian and Heideggerian influences, von Balthasar's theo-logic can be enriched.

Philosophy and Theology

So far I have considered the idea of Being and analogy as two major influences directing von Balthasar's conception of truth in the event of God's revelation. We

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[20] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 269.
[21] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 270.
[22] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 39.

now approach the third. It is found in the connection between philosophy and theology. The two factors already mentioned certainly indicate this connection. Yet the inherent relationship between philosophy and theology needs to be brought out in its own right. It opens to an horizon in which there can be no theology without philosophy.[23] In this regard, von Balthasar chooses to discuss the structures of creaturely and divine truth by reflecting explicitly on the interplay of the transcendentals. [24] This opens the way to reflecting on the most fundamental questions of Christian life and faith. Theology is not possible except by way of making ontological sense of God's beauty, goodness and truth and unity in the world.[25] Von Balthasar writes:

> In order to be a serious theologian, one must also, indeed, first, be a philosopher; one must – precisely also in the light of revelation – have immersed oneself in the mysterious structures of creaturely being .... Insofar as he is a philosopher, the authentic theologian by definition is struck by the boundless amazement at the structural complexity of the transcendentals in contingent being, whose bottomless mystery defies all claims to have definitely mastered any problem.[26]

The totality of Being cannot be exhausted by our reflections. In fact, it demands a sense of awe at its infinite mystery. In the light of revelation, the theologian might come to understand a deeper insight of truth, namely, that the hidden ground of love underlies the interplay of the transcendentals. But because the theo-logic presupposes ontology, it must first focus on the problem of the logos or the truth of Being itself. As von Balthasar admits, it is necessary to grapple with the laws of thought and discourse. Such a course of action gives greater depth to the proposals contained in his theological aesthetics and theological dramatics.[27] His ethics and aesthetics of truth are understood to convey a "true" knowledge of Being. To this end, the structural complexity of the transcendentals, that is their indissoluble perichoretic relation, is a phenomenon grasped by faith and knowledge.

Von Balthasar points out that the knower explores these structures to find that they unveil themselves while, at the same time, they also withdraw into mystery. The

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[23] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 7.
[24] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 7.
[25] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 8.
[26] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 8.
[27] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 7.

knower begins to discover that the truth of Being is structured. This is evident in for example the polarities existing between form and splendour within beauty, and between obedience and freedom within ethics.[28] The more the knower recognises the finitude of language and discourse of Being, the more that knower enters into the mind of the Creator in whom lies the ultimate truth, and from whom alone such truth might be revealed. By being immersed in the enigmatic structures of finite Being in the light of revelation, the philosopher-theologian discovers the truth of the world as it is encompassed by divine truth. It is an act of faith seeking understanding. Faith recognises that truth lies outside the subject in the knowledge that it is received ever anew from God: "The subject possesses the truth only in such a way that it also always receives it anew from God. ... Evidence is embedded in this faith in the same way that the truth of the world as a whole is encompassed by the divine truth".[29]

Love

We come now to the fourth factor. For von Balthasar, this truth is grounded in love, just as everything begins and ends in love.[30] He explains that there is an order in God's essence of love: love proceeds to Being, Being proceeds to knowledge and knowledge ends in love. In this sense, love, not Being or knowledge, is the ultimate ground of eternal truth. There is an eternal circulation in which the beginning and end are joined in the unity of love. The eternity grounds the truth and the meaning of Being.[31] Franz Rosenzweig wrote similarly of eternity: "To live in time means to live between beginning and end. He who would live an eternal life, and not the temporal in time, must live outside of time, and he who would do this must deny that 'between'".[32] This is to say that the ultimate ground of eternal truth is where the revelation of divine love (redemption) merges into the ever-renewed beginning of Creation. And so our human experience, Rosenzweig explains, is guided by the light of eternal truth.[33] Rosenzweig would share von Balthasar's understanding of the creature possessing truth only insofar as it is in God's realm.[34]

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[28] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 8-9.
[29] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 8, 261.
[30] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 272.
[31] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 272.
[32] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 420.
[33] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 417.
[34] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 266-267.

The point that both von Balthasar and Rosenzweig share is that the locus of eternal truth is in the human experience of revelation and not the totality of natural and social experience. However, the problem for both these thinkers is found in their respective ontologies. Von Balthasar's theo-logic is dependent on knowing and Being if it is to explicate the mystery of God as love. This is less the case with Rosenzweig. Levinas notes that Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* does in fact cross the limits of ontology, to speak of the beyond of Being or alterity.[35] He states:

> There can be no speaker or spectator behind the intrigue of *The Star of Redemption.* God, man, and world do not unite inside the head of a philosopher, or at the bottom of a transcendental consciousness. Neither do they emit any kind of generic unity. On the contrary, the thinker owes the very possibility of thinking to the event occurring through their coming out of mythical isolation in the light of the day of the Lord, that is to say, to Revelation. The correlation *cogitatio-cogitatum, noesis-noema*, object of idealist reflection, is not anymore the ultimate structure of the spiritual. In the bursting of Totality, where pure interiority does not succeed in coming out of the Myth or the cross the absolute interval separating it from the Other prior to transcendence of Revelation, we can find the basis of the priority of language over "pure thought."[36]

Rosenzweig's messianic theory of redemption acts as a bridge between von Balthasar and Levinas. On the one hand, Rosenzweig shares with von Balthasar an ontological view of God's Being as love and as eternal truth. On the other, he shares with Levinas an ethical view of God beyond Being. None the less, this chapter is exploring the possibility of another bridge, by connecting von Balthasar's conception of the role of truth in God's revelation with Levinas' ideas of truth and alterity. This is a more promising route. Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* was apparently not influenced by the Husserlian Phenomenology. And in some ways, it anticipated elements of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.[37] Both von Balthasar and Levinas have been influenced by Husserl and Heidegger, though von Balthasar is the more open of the two in this regard.

Up to this point, I have introduced four factors structuring von Balthasar's theo-logic. Taken together, these constitute a philosophical and theological inquiry presupposing

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[35] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165 and Emmanuel Levinas, "Foreword," in Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 21-22.
[36] Levinas, "Foreword," in Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 22.
[37] See Levinas, "Foreword," in Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 16 and Cohen, *Elevations*, 42-46.

an ontology of Being and presence. In this particular exploration of *Theo-Logic, Vol. I: The Truth of the World*, I will limit my analysis to von Balthasar's understanding of truth as participation since it focuses specifically on the relation between worldly truth and eternal truth.

There are four sections to von Balthasar's inquiry into truth as participation: *A. Participation and Revelation*; *B. Finitude and Infinity*; *C. In God's Safekeeping*; and *D. Confession.* I will comment on each of these in such a way to throw light on the Trinitarian *praxis* which will be treated in the next and final chapter.

Participation and Revelation

Von Balthasar considers that the relation between worldly and divine truth must be developed thematically.[38] He begins by examining how participation in God and God's revelation is related to Being and consciousness. After that, he considers the properties of truth, that is, unconcealment (*aletheia*) and faithfulness (*emeth*), in relation to the horizon of Being. When the essence of truth creates a sense of certainty and trust, an endless search begins. This, he suggests, signifies an a priori quality of truth, a quality of always being more. Hence, it would follow that for truth to be truth it cannot be exceeded by any human definition or intelligibility. Von Balthasar wants the reader to understand that truth is infinite and that any human knowledge of it is contingent upon such a proposition. It follows, therefore, that eternal Being and eternal self-consciousness coincide within truth's infinity as the condition of possibility for human cognition. When God's infinite consciousness unveils the meaning of God's Being within the sphere of absolute truth, the finite subject must touch on such divine consciousness for it is also the very sphere that all finite truth is dependent upon. Commenting on the infinite consciousness as the condition of possibility for finite consciousness, von Balthasar reflects:

> In this way, there opens up an analogy of self-consciousness, whose inmost, irrefragable certainty is the non-identity of finite and infinite consciousness. At the very moment when finite consciousness touches on the sphere of the divine (and, because it is self-consciousness, it *must* touch on it), it is immediately thrown back into an ever greater distance from it.[39]

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[38] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 227.
[39] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 228.

In this sense, the ontological dependence of finite truth is a moment in which the Being of God's truth is unveiled as a presence in theoretical consciousness. And yet it is still to be unveiled, given the horizon of unlimited meaning.[40]

We now approach the theme of truth as participation and revelation. In a passage expressing the analogy between finite and divine truth, von Balthasar writes:

> *Because* divine truth, being the truth of an *absolute* interiority, necessarily remains a mystery inherent in worldly truth in all of its manifestations, all worldly truth has some share in this mysteriousness. Specifically, the mystery inherent in worldly truth is given into the *possession* of worldly being, which can therefore act freely and spontaneously out of a personal interiority, yet it always remains only a *gift*, the gift of participation in the absolute interiority of divine truth, from which the creature draws its own mysteriousness. However hard it may try, in fact, the creature can never betray and profane its mystery as completely as it might intend by its sin. The mystery, in other words, is never given into the creature's possession in such a way that it ceases to remain, at the same time, in God's safekeeping.[41]

Here, the idea of participation rests on an ontological understanding of gift. It alone makes possible the experience of divine truth. It is ontological because the gift-character reveals something of God's Being, that is, knowledge of God's essence and existence. Furthermore, the search for the meaning of the truth of Being through participation can never ultimately be betrayed. Granted that the mystery is safeguarded in God, to assert nevertheless that the creature's sin is ultimately powerless in betraying and profaning the mystery presumes that God's divine truth contains something of a diastasis, a separation between God and the depth of human sin. But this position would seem to undermine von Balthasar's idea of powerlessness in his dramatic soteriology.

To hold that the mystery of divine truth remains in God's safekeeping suggests that the gift of participation retains the character of worldly power after it has been given or presented to consciousness. By contrast, von Balthasar has stated that God's powerlessness is a gift which is ever more powerful than worldly power.[42] The reason why the mystery of divine truth is ultimately protected from the destructive forces of human sin lies in understanding God on the basis of the analogy of Being,

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[40] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 227-229.
[41] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 231.
[42] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 326.

for it safeguards the difference between God and the creature. If we take von Balthasar's conception of truth further, it must follow that divine truth is an essence that must be safeguarded from the creature at all costs. I would argue that from a Levinasian perspective, God does not have to safeguard the truth against a perverse human participation in it. The nature of divine truth is infinite. It is encountered through an extreme passivity of responsibility before the Other.[43]

Truth as Persecution and Humiliation

My argument is that the gift of participation in divine truth cannot be a gift given to intentional consciousness, but is a non-present gift, a trace or the very proximity of God occurring in persecution and humiliation. On this point, Levinas writes:

> The idea of a truth whose manifestation is not glorious or bursting with light, the idea of a truth that manifest itself in its humility, like the still small voice in the biblical expression[44]– the idea of a persecuted truth – is that not henceforth the only possible modality of transcendence? ... Obviously such an opening can only be an ambiguity. But the appearing of an ambiguity in the seamless texture of the world is not a looseness in its weave or a failure of the intelligence that examines it, but precisely the proximity of God which can only occur in humility. ... The idea of persecuted truth thus allows us to put an end to the game of unveiling in which immanence always wins out over transcendence; for, once being is unveiled, even partially, even in mystery, it becomes immanent.[45]

On the whole, Levinas' radically transformed ethical context demands a rethinking of truth as transcendence rather than immanence. He points out that truth as transcendence takes the form of persecution and humiliation. Moreover, such a conception challenges the Heideggerian conception of truth as unconcealedness. It stands in direct contrast to von Balthasar's two qualities of truth, namely unconcealedness and trustworthiness. For Levinas, however, truth is determined by being of-the-other. This is to say that the original form of transcendent truth is God remaining with the contrite and humble on the margins of society (Isa. 57:15). Here, Levinas recognises that the force of transcendent truth is like a trace where God manifests God's self in humility. Accordingly, this trace prevents humanity confusing God's name and divinity with immanence.[46]

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[43] See Chapter Two, pp.64.
[44] [2 Kings 19:12]. See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 238.
[45] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 55-56.
[46] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56.

Still, with the idea of a persecuted truth comes an ambiguity. We have a sense of transcendence in the withdrawal of transcendence from consciousness. In this regard, ethical transcendence is beyond ego-consciousness. Accordingly, a concrete expression of transcendent truth would speak of substituting for the Other's persecution and humiliation beyond theoretical self-consciousness. How does Levinas' idea of truth stand in relation to God? It is this: we have an idea of truth deriving from God's proximity as an effaced trace in the face of the persecuted, defenceless Other. Truth then surfaces as a demand for justice. It is signified beyond objectivity in the giving of justice. In other words, the truth of God's word is beyond any notion of unveiling and verifying it as a trustworthy presence and experience of Being. Given Levinas' mistrust of presence and Being, it is not surprising that he speaks of the need for the humility that refuses to reduce the word "God" to thought and experience. The response to the first word of revelation is to give thanks for the very fact of being able to give thanks. Levinas writes: "One may wonder whether the first word of revelation must not come from man, as in the ancient prayer of the Jewish liturgy in which the faithful gives thanks not for what he receives, but for the very fact of giving thanks".[47]

The ideas of humility and persecution that characterise ethical transcendence constitute a "difficult condition". It is characterised by an ambiguity in which God's manifestation is also a distancing. Divine otherness is not a participation in the world. As Levinas writes:

> But the opening of ambiguity into which transcendence slips may demand a supplementary analysis. Can the God who humbles Himself to 'dwell with the contrite and the humble' (Isaiah 57:15), the God 'of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan,' the God manifesting Himself in the world through His covenant with that which is excluded from the world – can He, in his excessiveness, become a *present* in the time of the world? Isn't that too much for His poverty? Is it not too little for his glory without which His poverty is not a humiliation? In order for the alterity that upsets the order not to become at once *participation* in the order, in order for the horizon of the beyond to remain open, the humility of the manifestation must already be a distancing.[48]

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[47] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56.
[48] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56-57.

Otherness is given priority over participation. God is not a presence in the order of Being, nor something we participate in. For any such "participation" seeks to reduce or confuse transcendent truth with the immanence of thought and presence. The point I am making here is that there is no possibility of creaturely self-understanding even in relation to the analogy of Being that safeguards God's transcendence from the creature. Analogical thinking certainly seeks to acknowledge God as the ever-greater reality. It refers to God, however, in terms of lived experience as such thought is always an apprehension, that is, a partial knowledge of divine truth: "The knower knows that the truth he apprehends is only a part or an irradiation of the total truth in which he is embedded".[49] For Levinas, God cannot be contained in the creature's time. The divine trace is encountered in the countenance of the Other's face. He writes, "I'm not saying that the Other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God".[50] There is the Good beyond Being[51], a realm of divine transcendence beyond the disclosure and presence of Being and its thematisation in consciousness. Where von Balthasar makes reference to Being, Levinas refers to what is otherwise than Being, a place and time in which God's covenant might come to mind.

Von Balthasar has argued that the truth of the world is utterly contingent upon divine truth and its manifestations of mystery.[52] Levinas, in contrast, has attacked such a relationship, as in his idea of the trace, the very proximity of God in the face of every person. [53] In the passage quoted above, Levinas has asked whether God's manifestation can become a "present" in the world. He has responded by emphasising that the humility of God's manifestation must also be a distancing, or in other words, "a past that was never present".[54] By severing the link in time between God and the world, Levinas has directed us to a context of non-phenomenality wherein the truth of the world might be encountered rather than being unveiled and reduced to immanence. The Levinasian context of the encounter is connected to the non-phenomenality of the face. His context looks to the Infinite (the Good beyond Being) and its immemorial past (a past outside of memory and consciousness). Indeed, from such a non-

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[49] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 261.
[50] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 110.
[51] See Chapter Two, pp.47-51.
[52] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 231.
[53] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57.
[54] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57.

phenomenal starting point, the self is free to discover the truth of the world, inasmuch as it can persevere with the extreme passivity of being faced by the Other.

In the severing of transcendence from immanence, Levinas has shown that the self must be utterly removed from participating from truth *in the world.* The self must extricate itself from the time of being in-itself and being for-itself. In the absence of the *conatus* of Being, truth is determined by the good, namely the for-the-other: "But isn't what we really call the truth determined by the 'for-the-other,' which means goodness? And not in the first place by the 'in-itself' and 'for-itself' of the truth?"[55] Levinas' ethical position depends on a relation with otherness (the trace of *illeity*). It is actualised in the act of substitution to the point of expiation.[56] The possibility of truth in the world lies in the self emptying itself of its Being: "To be me is always to have one more responsibility".[57] In contrast, as soon as the self begins to seek the meaning of its own Being in the world, it has allowed consciousness to thematise its engagement in the world. The self, by virtue of disclosed truth, translates such experience into the belief that it can participate in divine truth, as von Balthasar contends: "Looked at from the creature's point of view, then, the relation between finite and infinite freedom is one of intrinsic, naturally necessary *participation* (so much so, in fact, that if its relation to God's truth were somehow broken off, worldly truth would instantaneously collapse in on itself and cease to be truth at all)".[58]

Up to now, I have been arguing for an understanding of truth. It is related to the state of persecution and humiliation rather than to the unveiling of Being to presence. Now, I wish to show that Levinas' notions of persecution and humiliation can lead to a deeper reading of von Balthasar's theo-logic, in its treatment of the relation between God and the world. Admittedly, von Balthasar works within the framework of ontology and phenomenology which aspires to explain the relation between worldly and divine Being as a presence in consciousness. On the other extreme, we have Levinas' non-phenomenal context that severs the manifestation of God from the world of lived experience. Thus, Levinas establishes first a sense of transcendent truth in the withdrawal of such transcendence from time and knowledge of the present.

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[55] See Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 263.
[56] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 58-60.
[57] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 60.
[58] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 232.

We are left with a distancing or a trace of God's immemorial presence located in the face of the Other. But, it is a trace that might be encountered through persecution and humiliation. It is this non-phenomenal context in which the subject's encounter of the truth of God's covenant with the world that can be illumined. This is to say that the revelation of God given in creation depends on living out an extreme passivity of substituting for the Other in a place and time beyond Being.

Truth and the Persecuted One

Von Balthasar does not offer examples of behaviour to illustrate the relation between worldly and divine truth. Neither does Levinas. Nonetheless, despite his complex language, Levinas does provide a more vivid picture of human suffering and ethical *praxis* in relation to God. A helpful example is Levinas' conception of the self as the persecuted one:

> The self involved in the *gnawing away at oneself* in responsibility, which is also incarnation, is not an objectification of the self by the ego. The self, the persecuted one, is accused beyond his fault before freedom, and thus in an unavowable innocence. One must not conceive it to be in the state of original sin; it is, on the contrary, the original goodness of creation. The persecuted one cannot defend himself by language, for the persecution is a disqualification of the apology. Persecution is the precise moment in which the subject is reached or touched with the mediation of the logos.[59]

For Levinas, the event of persecution is the absence of discourse, the break with every apology and every logos.[60] The sense of being reached by the mediation of the logos is, on the one hand, the susceptibility to the discourse of the world causing pain, outrage and unhappiness. On the other hand, it signifies the transcendence of self-consciousness, that is, substitution and responsibility even for the persecutor.[61] Levinas' conception of the persecuted one provokes a sense of self-transcendence as expiation for the Other. If there is to be discourse in which the logos might communicate, it is for the self to substitute for the Other as a persecuted one. Levinas names this the condition of being a hostage. This is a dramatic term, but with enough ethical force to break open what Levinas describes as the "barbarism of being".[62]

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[59] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 121.
[60] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 197.
[61] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 197.
[62] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 187.

How, then, does this relate to the deepest problem found in von Balthasar's theo-logic, namely, the relation between God and the world? I have outlined the Levinasian position concerning the hostage or persecuted one. In the humiliation of silence, the hostage does not seek the truth of the world through concern for Being. By contrast, the condition of being a hostage signifies truth as persecuted truth. Levinas understands this to be the self's "true" responsibility with "messianic" overtones of truth: "The *I* is the one who, before all decision, is elected to bear all the responsibility for the World. Messianism is that apogee in Being – a reversal of being "persevering his Being" - which begins in me". [63] Truth is not any type of participation in the realm of intentional consciousness. It is found in an extreme exposure to accusation, persecution, humiliation and expiation for others.

We have now begun to draw away from an understanding of the relation between worldly and divine truth based on participation in God and in God's revelation, towards a more ethical and messianic view based on encountering God's trace in the life of sacrificing for others. Rather than employing propositions signifying worldly truth as partaking in the mysteriousness of divine truth,[64] we have a conception of the logos (or discourse) beyond Being. Accordingly, transcendent truth is most evident in persecution and humiliation. Yet it is always enigmatic for it withdraws from the world of consciousness and presence. In this regard, Levinas writes: "The non-conscious is understood as the non-voluntary event of persecution, which qua persecution breaks off every justification, every apology, every logos".[65] Here, truth is signified as a trace by way of being reduced to silence, that is, the inability to defend oneself with language.[66] This is an absolute passivity of being responsible for the pain, outrage and unhappiness of persecution. We differ then from von Balthasar's position regarding the truth of the world as ontologically dependent on a judgment that presents the unveiling of the Being of God's truth. With Levinas, we contend that truth is ethically dependent on what is not available to theoretical consciousness, that is, the revelation and ethical testimony of disinterestedness.[67]

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[63] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 60.
[64] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 231.
[65] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 197.
[66] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 197.
[67] See Chapter Two, p.59.

Returning to the passage above, there is one more element that needs to be brought out. Levinas expresses the persecuted one as the living state of the original goodness of creation, and, therefore, not in the state of original sin. Within such a potent emphasis on original goodness over original sin, there is a more ancient and more primordial truth, namely, that responsibility is prior to all finite freedom. In other words, the goodness of creation, prior to all Being, has already claimed the subject, and inspired the very desire to be responsible for the ones on the margins of society.[68] In Levinas' account, this state signifies the self as incarnation or as being an Other. An "anarchic trauma" is implied.[69] The self is wounded, vulnerable, by being overwhelmed with responsibility for the Other. The subject has been called since time immemorial to be responsible for the Other. This disinterestedness cannot be reduced to propositions about the event and truth of Being. Accordingly, the outcome of the relation between God and the world is the subject who in the depths of itself can never escape God's command to be responsible for the Other.

We thus find ourselves approaching again the ambiguity into which transcendence slips. It unsettles the very idea of truth as an unconcealed presence in consciousness.[70] In contrast to the synchrony of presence, knowledge and Being upon which von Balthasar assumes, we are led to an understanding of truth which respects the immemorial and the non-phenomenal. Truth appears in the nakedness of the Other's face as a trace of God's proximity. In Levinasian terms, this is the truth of diachrony: "an unbridgeable difference between the Good and me, without simultaneity...".[71] Diachrony describes the self's responsibility for the Other as a past without any memory of prior commitment.[72] The Good, therefore, cannot be reduced into a theme as it precedes cognition and commitment.[73] Indeed, the Good, the word of God, articulates an unrepresentable past: a commandment to be responsibility for the Other to the point of expiation.[74]

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[68] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 122-123.
[69] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 123. See also Chapter Two, pp.47-48.
[70] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56 and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 126.
[71] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 122.
[72] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 170-171. See also Chapter Two, pp.32-33.
[73] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 120.
[74] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 122 and Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 170-173.

Truth and the Goodness of Creation

Where von Balthasar has elaborated truth in terms of an ontology and an analogy of presence, I have been attempting to consider truth from a Levinasian perspective. Where von Balthasar establishes a transcendental between God and the world to safeguard the mystery of divine truth from the destructive forces of human sin within the goodness of Creation, another perspective is possible: Levinas would see responsibility being prior to original sin: "To be persecuted, to be guilty without having committed any crime, is not an original sin, but the obverse of a universal responsibility – a responsibility for the Other [*l'Autre*] – that is more ancient than any sin".[75] The truth would need a divine safeguard within the good creation, only if the free creature is concerned with its own Being. In Levinas' account, the creature is called to a "difficult freedom", to be like God, infinitely responsible: "To be responsible over and above one's freedom is certainly not to remain a pure result of the world. To support the universe is a crushing charge, but a divine discomfort. It is better than the merits and faults and sanctions proportionate to the freedom of one's choices".[76] The creature, then, finds commitment to the Good in the absolute passivity of responsibility for others.[77]

Von Balthasar's analogical divide set between the creature and God necessarily undermines the idea of the goodness of God's creation. There is not so much a barrier erected between the creature and God as an open relationship of communication. Within this interrelationship, God's powerlessness, which von Balthasar names as God's righteousness and truth,[78] could be more appropriately conceived as the alterity or the very goodness of Creation on the Other's face commanding the creature to awake to a life of disinterestedness. This leads to understanding truth in the ethical metaphysical sense of coming to responsibility through time. It is to be found on the margins of society, in persecution and humiliation and in the "difficult condition" of expiation for the poor one. In this sense, truth relates to the divine powerlessness rather than to the divine power of safeguarding. When truth is beyond presence, when it is signified in otherness from an immemorial past, the safeguarding activity from God is not necessary. Truth is neither a function of the unconcealedness of Being nor

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[75] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 225.
[76] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 122.
[77] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 122.
[78] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 335.

the object of the divine safeguard. From here we can proceed to address the limitations of the analogy of Being in von Balthasar's reflection on finitude and infinity.

Finitude and Infinity

Von Balthasar assumes that the analogy of Being bears on the problem of the God-world relation. More precisely, it focuses discussion of the problem of how God might safeguard the divinity in God's self-revelation to the world. He asks whether God's self-communication to the world can transcend humankind's idolatrous images of God:

> The *analogia entis* forbids the erection of any overarching third that includes both God and the creature; God cannot fall under any concept. The problem, then, has to do with the relation between God and the world: Can God make himself understandable to the world *as God* without losing his divinity, without falling victim to a (Hegelian) dialectic between God and the world?[79]

The problem I have anticipated here is that the desire to understand God *as God*, that is *as such* is, in fact, the search to discover the meaning and truth of God's Being *as such*. On the basis of the analogy of Being, von Balthasar is aware, on the one hand, that God's appearance in the creature *as such* is not God; for the creature has its own worldly truth, a truth that defines its own Being. On the other, he is aware that the creature's truth is sustained and made possible by God's truth. Finitude is the fundamental characteristic of the creature's truth and Being. Only within finite limits can it express the infinity of God's truth and Being: "Moreover, this quality [of finitude] immediately expresses creatureliness and, therefore, immediately expresses the Creator's infinite being and infinite truth".[80]

For von Balthasar, the finitude of worldly truth is exemplified *par excellence* by the delimitation and definition of knowing. Describing how knowledge can construct a domain of truth, he writes, "Knowledge comes about in the following way: one delimits the domain of what is to be known vis-à-vis other truth, which is thereby excluded, and, by setting boundaries and by delineating their contour, determines the

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[79] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 17.
[80] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 244-245.

content of this domain".[81] In this position, the influence of both Husserl and Heidegger is detectable. First, it parallels Husserl's idea of the unity of transcendental apperception. Using the example of "the judgment 'the tree is green'",[82] von Balthasar emphasises that Being (the object of consciousness) is represented in the knowledge of sensible appearance. He adds, like Husserl, that such an object can never be known "as such": "Being, in this case the tree, is represented within knowledge, not in itself, but in the sensible appearance, which as such, as we have already had occasion to observe, is not yet known."[83] However, he seems to depart from Husserl when he states that the subject must seek the unreachable unity of the anonymous (universal) and personal forms of species in God alone: "Here man is reminded, more clearly than anywhere else, that he must seek the unattainable unity of the personal and of the universal in God alone".[84] Hence, even though the subject can never completely grasp the ground of its ontological mystery, it must nevertheless seek what is "unattainable".[85]

Like Heidegger, von Balthasar conceives of worldly truth in relation to nothingness and unconcealedness. Here, he extends these concepts from their Heideggerian context of finitude towards a divine horizon. Once the nothingness of worldly truth and value is disclosed, the mind can compare it with divine truth and recognise it in terms of the true divine disclosure of Being.[86] Knowledge for von Balthasar begins with apperceiving worldly truth, proceeds by discovering its nothingness, and finally takes the form of seeking eternal truth as it is unveiled by God's Being, "the limitless totality of being".[87]

The relationship between the analogy of Being to its phenomenal and ontological foundations is suggested in the following paragraph:

> To recognise creatureliness as creatureliness means to recognise God immediately within it. To perceive the limit of worldly truth means to apprehend concomitantly and tacitly what lies beyond it. ... The restricted nature of an individual being

[81] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 245.
[82] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 247.
[83] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 247.
[84] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 249.
[85] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 248-249.
[86] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 251-252.
[87] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 253.

> shows up only against the ever-present background of the disclosed being as a whole. ... Man's reason, then, is not shut up in finitude. Rather, it can function as reason, performing its finite work of knowing finite things, only because it is already in contact with the infinite. ... It follows from this that even the most insignificant act of thinking implicitly contains the knowledge of true infinity and that every judgment made by a finite intellect proves that there is a God.[88]

Here we have four points. First, there is an emphasis upon apprehending the lived experience of what lies beyond the limit of worldly truth. Second, even though worldly truth restricts an individual's Being, it is opened up by the unconcealedness of Being. Third, reason is determined not just by the finitude of worldly truth, but also and more so by the infinite totality of Being. Lastly, human thinking is not just constituted by finitude, but also by knowledge of a true infinity that in essence proves God's existence.

These four points are linked in the deepest problem von Balthasar must face in his theo-logic. Despite the dissimilarity between God and the world, how can there exist a similarity between them? Von Balthasar has tried to show that the finite person is a likeness and image of God because ultimately the truth of the world is grounded in the truth of God. Because such revelation remains indirect, that is to say God appears through the creature,[89] it must follow that it is nevertheless disclosed through thought and hence, as a presence in consciousness. Here lies the major limitation of the analogy of Being. Because it is the basis for ontological knowledge of God,[90] God is necessarily restricted to the realms of theoretical consciousness and Being. Finite reason itself can only operate because it is indwelt by a "living orientation" toward the infinite totality of Being: "The very fact that we think at all; the very fact that the finite intellect, under the impact of the limitless totality of being, feels compelled to posit the existence of absolute being and absolute truth ... demonstrates that finite reason itself can operate only because it is indwelt by a living orientation toward infinity". [91] This suggests that the finitude of worldly truth is endowed with an ontological trace of divine truth.

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[88] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 252-253.
[89] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 244.
[90] For a discussion on the analogy of Being, onto-theology and representation see Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 102.
[91] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 252-253.

In contrast to onto-theology, Levinas looks to the idea of the Good beyond Being. In this perspective, transcendence is outside consciousness, and its explanations or theological rationality of God. Here Levinas, by prioritising ethics, is continuing a tradition beginning with Plato's *Republic* and *Parmenides* and developed through Kant's distinction between the ethical and the ontological.[92] The Good is beyond Being in an eschatological and messianic sense as God humbling the divinity "to dwell with the contrite and the humble" (Isa. 57:15).[93] The overriding influence, however, is his distaste for analogy, particularly the analogy of Being with its attempt to "comprehend" the transcendent:

> Theology imprudently treats the idea of the relation between God and the creature in terms of ontology. It presupposes the logical privilege of totality, as a concept adequate to being. Thus it runs up against the difficulty of understanding that an infinite being would border on or tolerate something outside of itself, or that a free being would sense its roots into the infinity of a God. But transcendence precisely refuses totality, does not lend itself to a view that would encompass it from the outside. Every 'comprehension' of transcendence leaves the transcendent outside, and is enacted before its face. If the notions of totality and being are notions that cover one another, then notion of the transcendent places us beyond categories of being. We thus encounter, in our way, the Platonic idea of the Good beyond Being.[94]

Like Levinas, I wish to argue that the idea of the Good beyond Being provides an understanding of the relation between God and the creature free from the limitations of analogical thought and its reduction to presence. In contrast, Derrida, Ward and Purcell are of the opinion that Levinas' idea of the Good beyond Being cannot extricate itself from analogy.[95] In my view, such criticism arises from a misreading of Levinas' on transcendence, presence and non-presence. I will address, in particular, Ward and Purcell.

An Analogical Modification of the Good: Ward's Reading

First, Ward's own position in the context of his discussion on "theology and analogy" is largely guided by Derrida's analysis and argument that the theological is implied in Levinas' thinking. Ward seems convinced that Levinas' language falls close to "a

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[92] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 109. Ward also mentions that the idea of the Good beyond Being has its parallel in Plotinus' distinction between the One and the Nous.
[93] For an example of Levinas' reflection on Isaiah 57:15, See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57.
[94] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 293.
[95] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 183-186 and Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 308.

theological argument for the existence of God".[96] For example, Ward points out that for Derrida, Levinas' idea of the trace of God is in fact a language of presence. The result, Ward explains, is that Derrida describes Levinas' idea of the Good beyond Being as an analogous rapport between Being and beyond Being.[97] In Ward's reading, Derrida believes that Levinas implicitly espouses the analogy of Being. Furthermore, such a position is also dependent on Husserl's analogy of appresentation (intentionality). In fact, Ward still following Derrida, states that the analogy of appresentation is the reason why Levinas implicitly adopts the analogy of Being for it depends, in turn, on dialogical philosophy with its analogy of dialogue with God.[98] Accordingly, Ward prioritises Levinas' trinodal economy of *illeity* (the self, the Other and the trace of *illeity*) in terms of appresentation. For example, he writes: "... the Other for Levinas is not simply an appresentation of the Ego, but it, simultaneously, appresents and is appresented by the absolutely other (*autre*)". As a result, Levinas only "modifies" Husserl's intentionality.[99] If this is so, then such a view places more emphasis on Levinas "modification" of intentionality rather than his movement from ontology to ethical metaphysics, that is, the transformation of ontological categories into ethical terms.[100] It is therefore not surprising that Ward describes Levinas' thought as a "language of presence" and that "Levinas is resigned to betraying his own intentions in his philosophical discourse".[101]

Ward is convinced that Levinas' idea of the Good beyond Being expresses an analogical relation between Being and Beyond Being, that is, between the totality of the existent and transcendence. I argue that Ward and Derrida, like Purcell who also adds that ethical *praxis* is not conceivable without ontology,[102] cannot appreciate Levinas' position on the Good beyond Being. However Ward and Purcell differ in

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[96] Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 184.
[97] Here, Ward is referring to Jacques Derrida, *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987), 564. See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 184.
[98] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 185.
[99] Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 186.
[100] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 115.
[101] Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 184, 190.
[102] Purcell states: "The difficulty of the separation of being and beyond is not only the problem Derrida indicates regarding the impossibility of the thought of the absolute other; it is also the problem of incarnating responsibility without ontology. Levinas' stress on the other beyond being to whom the subject is always and already responsible may affirm the absolute uncompromisable value of the other, but it offers no way of linking responsibility with practical commitment to the other. In place of the gulf between being and the good, we would wish to argue for a wider understanding of being which accommodates the good, and enables the good to be actualised." See Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 329.

this respect. While both understand the relationship of the self with the Other is in fact analogical,[103] Purcell goes further by seeking to define the Good within Being with an emphasis of "***being*** otherwise than Levinas' comprehension of Being".[104] Let us look further at Purcell's "advancement" and how it misrepresents Levinas' sense of transcendence.[105]

The Good in Being: Purcell's Reading

First, the term, "advancement". Purcell is fond of using the word, "advance", to describe his development of Levinas' thought for the purposes of Christian theology. Such a term does not do justice to Levinas' Jewish origins as it speaks more of Christianising Levinas' writings than of drawing from his ideas. For example, Purcell writes: "... we want to try to advance Karl Rahner and Emmanuel Levinas along the narrow way of convergence. We want to let the thought of Rahner and Levinas speak, as it were, in each other's time in order to recognise, despite their differences, something of each other in the other, to recognise primarily the significance of the Other in what each of them says". Here, Purcell desires to use the philosophical insights of Levinas' thought to re-read and deepen Rahner's thought. But this risks betraying Levinas' thought to ontology, as Purcell attempts to think otherwise than Levinas' comprehension of Being.

For Levinas, the ethical encounter with God is beyond Being. But Purcell will wish to enquire into the appropriateness of this position. He will argue that this encounter takes place, not beyond Being, but in the goodness of Being. Purcell engages Levinas' writings critically in order to redeem an ethically grounded ontology from the contamination of onto-theology. He identifies, "The ontological question of the

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[103] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 183-186 and Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 308.

[104] See Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 297.

[105] For a review of Purcell's development of Levinas' theology, see my article, "A Critical Review of Michael Purcell's Theological Development of Levinas' Philosophy," *The Heythrop Journal* 44:2 (April, 2003), 147-166. The article critically reviews Purcell's attempt to develop Christian theology with Levinas' thought in his book, *Mystery and Method: The Other in Rahner and Levinas* and in his article, "Leasing God with Levinas: Tracing a Trinity with Levinas". In offering criticism, the article provides alternative perspectives to Purcell's treatment of Levinas' method, alterity and theological reflection, redefining the meaning of Being and his work on the Trinity. In particular, the article finds that Purcell's conception to signify the Good within Being is ultimately a position wholly otherwise than Levinas' thought.

meaning of Being" as "the ethical question of the significance of the Other".[106] This suggests the question of whether Levinas' writings do in fact have an implicit ontology or a meta-ontology that "accommodates the good, and enables the good to be actualised".[107] In spite of the idiosyncratic semantics of Levinas' philosophy, the ethical dimension in his writings "contests" the Kantian understanding of ontology exemplified in the question, "What can I know?" Understanding such a position on knowledge and thinking entails a thorough examination of Levinas' notion of beyond Being.

At the heart of Purcell's experiment with the thought of Rahner and Levinas is the challenge to rethink the question of Being: "The question is not Being, but whether Being is the question".[108] This is an important turning point whereby Purcell re-directs ontological thinking to an ethical context: "The ontological question of the meaning of Being becomes the ethical question of the significance of the Other, the interlocutor, the one who makes significance significant".[109] In such reasoning is an implicit challenge to Levinas' reduction of Being to totality. Purcell is not comfortable with Levinas rejection of the whole Western ontological tradition:

> What we wish to enquire after in this chapter is whether Levinas' choice for the Good and his privileging of the Good over Being, is appropriate. Levinas' choice is a choice between two *alternatives*, which is really no choice. Is there not perhaps what we might term a *tertium gaudens*[110] which is neither in the alternation of Good and Being, but in the very goodness of Being. Being itself is not opposed to the Good, but is itself good. Being and the Good are One. What we want to argue is that it is not so much a question of the *otherwise than Being* but of ***being*** *otherwise*, and particularly of ***being*** otherwise than Levinas' comprehension of being.[111]

In his advocacy of a return to the question of Being, does Purcell fall back into the totality of ontological thinking by revising the notion of "*otherwise than Being*" in terms of "***being*** *otherwise*"? Here, he implies that the Good is not located beyond Being, but is associated with Being: "Being and the Good are One"[112] because Being

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[106] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 343.
[107] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 329.
[108] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 168, 343.
[109] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 343.
[110] A *tertium gaudens* is a happy (unforeseen) medium between two opposing positions.
[111] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 297.
[112] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 297.

"accommodates the good, and enables the good to be actualised".[113] Even though Purcell does not mention association, he might want to argue that association rather than accommodation within the other is better phraseology. In a sense there is a movement from accommodation to association, whereby the Good of responsibility within Being is actualised as "practical commitment to the other".[114]

For Purcell, accepting the value of Being as Good opens the horizon of incarnating practical responsibility in the world. He will point out that the notion of beyond Being, especially articulated as diachronic responsibility for the neighbour, cannot in fact be practically shown in the sense of being proven or demonstrated: "Levinas' stress on the other beyond being to whom the subject is always and already responsible ... offers no way of linking responsibility with practical commitment to the other".[115] In a sense, Purcell is correct to point out that Levinas like Rahner does not offer an adequate illustration of what is meant by responsibility for the other. But on the other hand, Levinas does emphasise that the ethical relationship precedes not only thematisation and cognition, but also practical consciousness or commitment: "Consciousness reverts to obsession. ... Obsession is a responsibility without choice, a communication without phrases or words".[116] The whole issue for Levinas is how we can truly be responsible if we are beyond Being or beyond the world of presence. It seems that Purcell has missed part of Levinas' point that the world is not simply one of presence or Being.

In presenting the idea of Being as inclusive of the Good, Purcell refers to an instance in *Totality and Infinity* where Levinas speaks of Being as exteriority in contrast to the univocal understanding of Being as totality: "While Levinas seeks an egress from the totality of Being, Being as totality does not exhaust the meaning of Being. Being perdures not simply as totality but also as exteriority".[117] This overlooks the emergence of an ambiguous understanding of Being in *Otherwise than Being*, which

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[113] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 329.
[114] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 329.
[115] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 329.
[116] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 120. See also Chapter Two, pp.61-62.
[117] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 317-318. Here, I have found that Purcell emphasises Levinas' notion of Being as exteriority in *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas writes: 'Being is exteriority: the very exercise of its being consists in exteriority'. See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 290.

Levinas names "the amphibology of being".[118] Here, Levinas is intent on challenging Heidegger's emphasis of Being in its verbal sense as an event (such as the unconcealment of truth), in which truth is confused with the manifestation of disclosed Being. In my judgment, this verbal sense of Being is also found in Purcell's "advancement" of Levinas' thought when he writes: "To be is to offer oneself towards the other, to move towards the other in service. It is *to be* good".[119] In contrast to Heidegger and Purcell, Levinas locates the Good beyond the verbal nature of Being and situates it in diachrony:

> The beyond being, *being's other* or *otherwise than being*, here situated in diachrony, here expressed as infinity, has been recognized as the Good. ... The diachrony is itself an enigma: the beyond being does and does not revert to ontology; the statement, the beyond, the infinite, becomes and does not become a meaning of being.[120]

The Good is before, in, and otherwise than Being. The emphasis is on "otherwise". When Purcell explains that Levinas' univocal understanding of Being as totality is not consistent as it is also understood as exteriority, he is reading Levinas with his own bias, namely, to affirm the notion of Being as inclusive of the Good. Consequently, he fails to address the amphibology of Being and the enigma of diachrony.

Granting the divide between Purcell and Levinas, could they nevertheless be emphasising the same thing, that is, the Good, by each uniquely re-defining the meaning of Being with a sense of alterity? In other words, does it matter whether Purcell stresses that Being accommodates and actualises the Good, or whether Levinas situates the Good beyond Being? Both seek to argue for the connection between the Good and alterity through an ethical existence in the world. This is, however, more than a problem of semantics. In my view, their difference relates to the fundamental problem of the logos, to speak of God in a rational manner. For Purcell, ontology under the realm of alterity is the ground of the Good. But Levinas has rejected any ontological thematisations of the Good. Here, Purcell may have misunderstood his privileging of the Good over Being. After all, Levinas points out that the word "God" is non-thematisable because it overwhelms semantics and as a

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[118] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 19.
[119] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 319.
[120] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 19.

result, does not enter into any grammatical category.[121] At this point, we could further refer to Saracino's question: "Indeed, in Levinas' writings of the ethical structure of *for-the-Other*, is not <u>being</u> *for-the-Other* implied?"[122] This question seems to suggest that Levinas' idea of "for-the-Other" does imply the category of Being. But this is in fact a misreading of Levinas' idea of alterity and its connection with the idea of *illeity*. It is precisely because of the trace of *illeity* (or God) that the for-the-Other of responsibility is beyond the category of Being. Hence, it is not "Being" but the trace of *illeity* that is implied in Levinas' idea of "for-the-Other".

The Good Beyond Analogy and Presence

Unlike Purcell and Ward,[123] I argue that Levinas' idea of the Good is located in a site outside analogy and presence. It is situated in the place and time of transcendence in which the logos concords with disinterestedness. This is a messianic time of persecution and humiliation, of giving oneself as an Other "as such" to others on the margins of society. Here, and only in this space and time, is it possible to theologise in the world. However, in difference to Levinas who recognises that philosophy is called upon to reduce the danger of conceiving God as an essence, I would argue that theology is called upon to do the same. Levinas limits the rational articulation of God to ethical metaphysics, especially in view of theology's association with ontology. Nonetheless, once theology has acknowledged the non-phenomenal context of ethical metaphysics, it too is called, not only to reduce the danger of conceiving God as an essence, but also to consider how the Good beyond Being transforms ethical conduct and informs its *praxis*.

Up to now, I have been presenting the idea of the Good beyond Being as an alternative for von Balthasar's analogy of Being. Theology must conceive the relation between God and the world in a site beyond the category of Being. A non-phenomenal context would enrich von Balthasar's comprehension of the relation between finitude and infinity. The idea of the Good beyond Being undermines any position based on God's analogical presence to consciousness. God remains beyond personal experience and objectivity. Only the Other's countenance signifies the trace

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[121] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162. See also Chapter Two, pp.37-38.
[122] See Saracino, *Openness as Gift*, 241.
[123] See Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 183-186 and Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 319.

of God as it commands the self to radically turn towards a life of ethical transcendence. The logos in God overflows thought and cannot be reduced to consciousness. This is to say that the relation between finitude and infinity is an overwhelming encounter with the Good beyond Being, signifying the divine logos as a non-present and immemorial trace in the Other's face. This encounter does not contain the proof of God. It is rather the space and time of God's transcendence in which the finite can be an image and likeness of the Infinite.

At this point, let us move on to von Balthasar's sense of the creature's preservation in God in our consideration of the theological efficacy of the Good beyond Being. I will introduce further relevant aspects of Rosenzweig's thought.

In God's Safekeeping

Von Balthasar, as we have noted so often above, considers that the creature has truth in so far as it is "*kept safe*"[124] in the archetype of God, that is, in the archetypal form of justice and love.[125] This relation of the finite creature to the Infinite contains three qualitative aspects of disclosed truth, namely, the form of believing trust (*emeth*), secondly, the preservation of the world's Being in God, and thirdly, the apperception of God in the sphere of the divine truth.[126] These aspects are also found in Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*, without, however, the impact of the phenomenological tradition.[127] But, this is not to say that Rosenzweig does not speak of phenomena. In fact, he distinguishes between creatures and the phenomena of existence to stress the cognition of life as preservation: "Compared to the 'phenomena' of existence, living beings are truly 'beings.' Cognition of existence is the recognition of its transformations. Cognition of life, however, would be the recognition of its preservation".[128] Later, in his comparison of Judaism and Christianity, he will instance preservation as the covenant or "communion through time" between God and humanity.[129]

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[124] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 267.
[125] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 266-267.
[126] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 261, 264.
[127] See Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 222-223, 346, 394-395.
[128] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 222-223.
[129] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 346.

According to Rosenzweig, the individual life is verified in this place and time of truth or "the common ground of revelation".[130] The verification at stake here equals to an experience in the sense of perceiving a part of eternal truth on the basis of being seen in God. Rosenzweig distinguishes the creature perception of a part of the truth from God's possession of its fullness. The self can never experience truth in the same way as God: "And even if he can experience God, can hear God's voice, he by no means experiences thereby what God himself experiences".[131] Ultimately for Rosenzweig, the creature's experience of revelation is indirect. It rests upon verifying eternal truth through perception occurring in God's experience which Rosenzweig expresses as "being seen in God": "True, the whole too can be perceived only where it has become part, and so the whole of the Truth, the whole truth can be perceived by being seen in God".[132]

Rosenzweig's idea of the relation between God and the creature has similarities with von Balthasar's theo-logic. According to von Balthasar, the creature's preservation in God is never a total apprehension of divine truth: "The truth is always greater than a finite intelligence's grasp of it, and such an intelligence grasps it only in the consciousness that it is greater".[133] Furthermore, God's experience of the creature's archetype contains the full measure of the creature's Being and essence. It is unveiled to human consciousness only in part.[134] Compared to Rosenzweig's idea of verifying through perception the place and time of eternal truth, von Balthasar speaks of the form of believing trust apprehended in the place and time of infinite consciousness that encompasses all knowledge. Despite the absence of Husserlian phenomenology in Rosenzweig's thought, he is able to distinguish the difference between what effectively is God's experience and the creature's lived experience. Von Balthasar also brings out this difference in more analogical and phenomenal terms by stating that infinite consciousness encompasses finite consciousness: "Already in the most original act of taking possession of oneself, finite consciousness must set itself over against the infinite consciousness that encompasses it".[135] But, von Balthasar goes further than Rosenzweig by embracing the totality of the analogy of Being. Let us

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[130] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 394.
[131] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 395.
[132] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 394.
[133] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 261.
[134] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 261.
[135] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 260.

return to the *Star of Redemption* to compare and clarify the importance of analogy for these two thinkers.

In the *Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig states that truth is the shining of God's countenance. God alone lets his face shine upon us so that we might recognise a portion of the truth. Rosenzweig writes: "The truth is this shining of the divine visage alone. ... By no means does it become a figurative truth because this countenance is turned toward us, God's portion imparted to us; for even as literal and most literal truth it would be none other than – portion and countenance". [136] The rational mind is powerless before God. For the creature must leave behind analogical thought in order to recognise truth as it is in God. By following the words issuing from the mouth of God (Micah 6:8), the creature walks in the light of God's face, and comes to share in the divine truth.[137] In recognition of alterity, every human being is singular, for the self cannot reduce the Other to thought and presence. The totality is shattered: the three regions of God, the world and humanity cannot be synthesised as a whole. Only before God might the truth of the world become synthesizable in part.[138] And thus we touch upon the ideas of immanence and transcendence. Von Balthasar for his part states that only on the basis of the correct analogical connection between the finite and the infinite might the creature know that it is in God's safekeeping. He writes:

> Which of these two truths about the creature is the true one – the truth of the archetype that God has and beholds in himself or the truth of the image, which distances itself, indeed, falls away, from the archetype? If the truth of the image is its definitive form, the creature is justified and saved, but on the basis of God's creative gaze, which sees and declares what is as if it were ought to be. If, on the other hand, the truth of the image in its self-distancing from the archetype is definitive, then this image has to be declared inadequate and, therefore, rejected.
> At this point, we need to recall our earlier remark that the creature's truth extends in a seamless continuity from the immanent idea (the *morphe*) through the idea embedded in the context of the world to the transcendent idea present in God.[139]

For von Balthasar, the major factor in the event of God's Being is unveiling the truth of the archetype to the creature in God. The creature is ever dependent upon God's creative gaze, which ensures the creatures apprehension of the archetype in its

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[136] See Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 418.
[137] See Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 424.
[138] See Levinas, "Foreword," in Mosès, *System and Revelation*, 19.
[139] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 265-266.

definitive form of love and justice. Hence, unlike Rosenzweig, von Balthasar maintains that the creature recognises truth as it is in God on the basis of apprehending it in the sphere of the divine. The implication is that the activity of faith is inherent in the act of knowing.[140] But, although von Balthasar stresses that finite consciousness is encompassed by infinite consciousness, nevertheless the knowledge gained of God's absoluteness and divinity depends on the creature's self-consciousness: "God is known as mystery in the form of self-consciousness".[141] Such knowledge of God's inner mystery is given only in part.[142] As argued in Chapter Three, such knowing of God must be related at least to some level of lived experience. Von Balthasar seems to imply this when he states: "Rather, already in its first act of knowing, it approaches the object [the existence and knowledge of God] with the inner form of the analogy of consciousness".[143] Hence, we can summarise that von Balthasar describes the finite's attitude towards eternal truth in God on the basis of the analogy of Being, the analogy of faith, the analogy of appresentation, the idea of Being as unconcealment and the Platonic idea of archetypal forms.[144] Looking at these influences, the impact of alterity is virtually ignored. But alterity alone provides the space and time for the creature to testify to God's transcendence.

Alterity and Transcendence

Thus far, I have sought to draw out further implications and limitations of the analogy of Being by comparing and contrasting Rosenzweig and von Balthasar. Both speak of the creature's experience of divine truth as a knowledge dependent on being seen in God or being lifted up to God's divine sphere. Furthermore, they both exhibit a definite sense of the difference between the creature's lived experience of God's truth and God's experience of truth as it is. Granted that von Balthasar speaks of the importance of analogical thought as that which describes the unfolding of divine truth to the creature, Rosenzweig stresses that the creature must leave behind analogical thought in order to recognise truth as following God's word, that is to say the life of alterity. Here, Levinas has made a significant development of Rosenzweig's writings

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[140] See also von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 260-261.
[141] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 272.
[142] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 255, 261.
[143] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 260.
[144] For a lucid discussion of the Platonic idea of archetypal forms, see Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind. Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 6-12.

especially in regard to alterity and the shattering of totality. Moreover, we have in Levinas' writings an understanding of alterity that borders the limits of phenomenology. Let us now turn our attention to Levinas and von Balthasar.

Previously in this chapter,[145] I argued that the Levinasian idea of the Good beyond Being could overcome the limitations of the analogy of Being in von Balthasar's theo-logic. We are now in a position to see how the idea of the Good beyond Being has further relevance to a theological context. Specifically, I want to argue that the Good beyond Being or transcendence safeguards the word "God" from the uniformity of Being. It is not as von Balthasar contends that the creature must be kept safe in the archetype in God, but that the logos in which the word "God" is pronounced must be safeguarded from onto-theological explanations and proof. In other words, neither the creature nor even God needs safeguarding, but rather the logos or discourse of God. In the following passage, von Balthasar explains how the creature knows it is kept safe in the archetype of justice and love in God:

> Because the archetype in God, that is, the higher reality into which the creature is elevated and that counts as its definitive truth before God, is a progeny of love, the creature knows that it is *kept safe* in this archetype. To be sure, it has an existence and an essence in itself, and this existence and essence is a reality in and for itself that is not identical with God; but even this reality of its own is something that it has inside of God. It has this reality only insofar as it is in God, is generated by him, and is protected and embraced by his all-encompassing essence.[146]

In this passage von Balthasar provides an onto-theological demonstration of the creature's reality in God. For example, provoked by the need to explain what makes the finite creature an image and likeness of God,[147] he suggests that the creature's reality is inside God. Von Balthasar finds that the archetype in God affects the creature in such a way that it might not only imitate God's archetypal justice and love, but also implies an attitude of knowing. Because love, as the fulfilment of justice, is also the ground in which the creature might know the divine reality,[148] the creature is a progeny of love; its reality in God is generated by God. Lifted up into God's higher reality, inspired with knowledge of God's love and further kept safe by God's all

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[145] See "5.3.1 The Good Beyond Being".
[146] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 266-267.
[147] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 10.
[148] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 266.

encompassing essence, the creature possesses the evidence that its existence and essence is a reality it has in God.

Let us now consider Levinas' ethical site of transcendence, the Good beyond Being, with a specific emphasis on disinterestedness. Since responsibility precedes finite freedom, how might this sense of alterity enter entry into von Balthasar's discourse of the logos? First, let us return to Levinas' idea of the Good beyond Being in which we find passivity identified as the place and time where the Good *is* and when the Good is named "God":

> The passivity inconvertible into a present is not a simple *effect* of a Good, which would be reconstituted as the cause of this effect; it is in this passivity that the Good *is*. Properly speaking the Good does not have *to be*, and *is* not, were it not out of goodness. The passivity is the being, from *beyond being*, of the Good, which language is right to circumscribe – betraying it, to be sure, as always – by the word non-being. Passivity is the locus, or more exactly the non-locus, of the Good, its exception to the rule of being, always disclosed in logos, its exception to the present. Plato has reminded us of the long trials of the eye that wants to fix the sun in its sojourn. But the sun is not forever withdrawn from the gaze. The invisible in the Bible is the idea of the Good beyond being. To be obliged to responsibility overflowing freedom, that is, responsibility for the others. ... It is the trace of a past which declines the present and representation, the trace of an immemorial past. ... In an immemorial past without a present, through the ambiguity of the trace, it is non-absent. This value is, by an abuse of language, named. It is named God.[149]

The general context assumes that the idea of the Good beyond Being identifies alterity as the locus of transcendence. Levinas describes the locus more exactly as a non-locus; it occurs in a non-present time, as a trace of an immemorial past. Granted that the "non-locus" of the Good cannot be reduced to the present and representation, it endures, nonetheless, as passivity. For passivity signifies a response to the logos of God in responsibility for those invisible on the margins of society (Isa. 57:15). By calling into question von Balthasar' ontological articulation of truth, we wish to resituate his theology within the context of alterity and transcendence. Hence, any enhancement of von Balthasar's theological discourse on the relation between the creature and God depends on its recognition of the ethical site of transcendence, a site signifying the idea of the Good beyond Being.

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[149] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 135-136.

For Levinas, the notion of responsibility overflows freedom. The very passivity in which the Good *is*, bespeaks a bond between the subject and God since time immemorial.[150] If such a bond or indeed covenant is to be named (risked in thematisation "which philosophy is called upon to reduce"[151]), then the subject must have no choice but to be commanded by the Good to take up its election to be responsible. In this sense, Levinas' idea of passivity speaks of a responsibility as indeclinable, unique and irreplaceable.[152] It is here that we approach an idea of *praxis* in the space and time of the Good beyond Being. This is to say that the subject must hear and respond to God's logos, and even risk naming the encounter as "God" or the Good. In contrast, von Balthasar remains within the site of God's Being and essence. There, the creature possesses its definitive truth before God.[153] Now, by replacing this site of analogy and ontology with the language of alterity, then it follows that the starting point is the subject's extreme state of passivity that culminates in the radical life of suffering humiliation and persecution for those on the margins of society.

The ethical and extreme behaviour of the subject has of course been anarchically affected by the trace of an immemorial past. But while in most respects the subject is unaware of the complexities and enigmas of such passivity, the ethical sensibility has been awakened by the ambiguity of the trace (transcendence to the point of absence): "... the approach of an infinite God, an approach which is his proximity".[154] If the subject desires to have its definitive truth before God, then its desire must become a desire for the Good. It must in justice share in the destitution encountered in the Other's face. This is the priority of the ethical over the ontological.

The ontological reality of truth in the world, embraced and protected by God's essence and Being, has thus been countered by an extreme passivity of responsibility in the creature's response to the trace of God. In the wake of Levinas and Rosenzweig, I argued that the creature must leave behind analogical thought in order to encounter the truth of God's logos as the Good beyond Being, that is, in the very transcendence of alterity. On this ethical metaphysical level, theology can escape the

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[150] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 136-137.
[151] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.
[152] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 134-135.
[153] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 266-267.
[154] For a discussion on the ambiguity of the trace of *illeity* and also its possible confusion with the *there is*, see Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165-166, 185-186.

confines of objectivity, presence and Being. In other words, the language of alterity brings out the "difficult condition" that must characterise theology, namely the extreme passivity of responsibility in which every human being has been commanded since time immemorial. Insofar as the creature is affected by this non-phenomenal reality, the conditions of possibility exist for a theology rooted in ethical metaphysics. Theology thus needs the enrichment of ethical metaphysics, through its acknowledgement of alterity and transcendence. Accordingly, in commenting on the last section of von Balthasar's analysis of truth as participation, I will argue against the view affirming that an ontological unveiling of the creature before God is the locus of truth and the a priori of ethics.[155]

Confession

For von Balthasar, the relation between the creature and God is initiated by an ontological unveiling of the mystery of truth. The unveiling takes the form of knowledge and presence.[156] This suggests that the truth of God's subjectivity is found in both self-consciousness and in the sphere of absolute mystery. Von Balthasar speaks of this in the sense of the creature's nakedness before God: "The creature is naked before God. But its nakedness is veiled under the vesture of God's mystery. God sees its inmost essence".[157] In other words, the creature participates in God's infinite personality, a participation in which God sees the creature's deepest essence. In von Balthasar's mind, such participation implies an apprehension of the mystery of Being. This, in turn, unveils to self-consciousness the ultimate theo-logical proposition that God is love.[158]

Furthermore, the participation in the disclosure of God's Being is also shaped by an attitude of spiritual and conscious abandonment. Accordingly, the creature must consciously unveil itself before God via confession and acknowledgment. Von Balthasar explains that the creature must not only open its will to understand that its Being and essence are in God and seen by God, but also that it must want to be what God wills it to be. This is to say that the creature's self-surrender to God enables a participation in the mystery of God's truth, and thus a participation in God's Being,

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[155] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 269-270.
[156] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 268.
[157] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 269.
[158] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 272.

unconcealment and love: "The creature's will is open to be disposed of according to God's will, and it is here that we find the creature's ultimate attitude before God and the quintessence of all perfection".[159]

In his exploration of the rationality of divine revelation to creation, von Balthasar points to the creature's self-surrender to God is the sole condition of ethics. He is therefore concerned with the creature's relationship with the neighbour, for the creature is not alone before God, but stands together with others. This would suggest that the creature's participation in God is also a participation in the unveiling of the neighbour's truth and Being before God. To reach the heights of holiness, an ethical openness towards the neighbour is necessary:

> If one wants to know another, it must try to contemplate the other with God's eyes; it must, like God, look upon the other's defects through the medium of the archetype and measure, in order to overcome the distance between archetype and image in (an unfailingly just) love.
> We can look at our neighbour in this way only in the closest possible reliance upon God, in prayer, and in self-denial. ... The confession of one's unveiledness before God and confession of the unveiledness of one's neighbour before us are both only one aspect within the all-ruling confession of God's mystery for every creature.[160]

We discover here a phenomenology of the other's defects based upon an ontological unveiling of the other's truth in God's archetype of justice and love. Yet, by prayer and self-denial, the creature comes to contemplate the other with God's perspective. None the less, this contemplation or confession of unveiledness is in the form of self-consciousness.[161] A finite subject's understanding of the other's defects is dependent upon representing in consciousness "God's mystery for every creature". In this confession of God's mystery for each and all, the creature has a glimmer of God's eternal truth and love. Von Balthasar's attempt to give an ethical perspective to the confession of God's mystery occurs at the end of his ontological inquiry into the revelation of God given in creation.[162] But to arrive at ethics at the end of such a philosophical inquiry is to have arrived too late. With Levinas, I have argued that ethics, rather than ontology, should be the first philosophical starting point for

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[159] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 270-271.
[160] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 271.
[161] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 272.
[162] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 271.

theology. Hence, the deepest problem remains, namely, how to give the ethical priority over the ontological.

In this chapter, I have introduced the Levinasian ideas of truth as persecution and humiliation and the idea of the Good beyond Being in order to locate an ethical metaphysical site for theology. Transcendence is only encountered via alterity. Admittedly, there are limitations here: the hyperbolic responsibility demanded might very well seem out of reach for any human person. If von Balthasar's theology is to be grounded first in ethics, then a practical ethical context beyond Being needs to be elaborated. For Levinas, such a context is informed with liturgy and prayer. It springs from the "difficult condition" of devoting oneself to the Other's hunger, and offering prayer and sacrifice to God on their behalf, as God suffers the sufferings of humanity.[163]

It follows that an ethical site outside ontology is made possible for theology in two ways: first, by reversing von Balthasar's order. What were his final words on ethics must now become the starting point. Second, once ethics is conceived as first theology, a form of theological *praxis* can be elaborated. The *praxis* of prayer and liturgy in Levinas' thought makes the height of transcendence reachable. Though the ideas of truth as persecution and humiliation and of the Good beyond Being never lose their force, they can be deepened and extended to the activities of prayer and liturgy. With this in mind, I will now proceed to indicate how prayer and liturgy as a *praxis* of alterity and of transcendence, can enhance von Balthasar's theo-logic.

Prayer and Liturgy

In an ethical metaphysical sense, prayer is sharing in God's suffering and is the work of redemption. Liturgy, in its original Greek sense, is to accept without thought of reward or compensation, the burden of devoting oneself to serving the Other.[164] I have concluded that prayer and liturgy[165] are together both the *praxis* and the logos of the Good beyond Being. Through prayer and liturgy, ethics attains priority over the

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[163] See Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, xiv; Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 181-182; and Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, 130.
[164] See Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, xiv; Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 181-182; and Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, 130.
[165] See Chapter Two, pp.51-54.

ontological unveiling of the creature before God. Prayer and liturgy are necessary components of religion. Levinas, bypassing theology, writes:

> The relation with the other (*autrui*) is not therefore ontology. This tie to the other (*autrui*), which does not reduce itself to the representation of the Other (*autrui*) but rather to his invocation, where invocation is not preceded by comprehension, we call *religion*. The essence of discourse is prayer. ... In choosing the term *religion* – without having pronounced the word *God* or the word *sacred* – we have initially in mind the meaning which Auguste Compte gives to this term in the beginning of his *Politique Positive*. Nothing theological, nothing mystical, lies hidden behind the analysis that we have just given of the encounter with the other (*autrui*).[166]

For Levinas, the essence of discourse is prayer. But one can object from his removal of theology from such discourse. After all, a theological analysis of the subject's prayer and liturgy of responsibility for the Other remains possible. Though Levinas does not entirely dismiss theological concepts and symbols, he is suspicious of their ontological foundation.[167] But what if theology were to have an ethical metaphysical foundation? For Levinas, however, only philosophy has such a foundation.[168] His view of theology is a limitation, as he priorities philosophy as "the wisdom of love at the service of love".[169] There is no reason why theology cannot be called upon to do the same. For it to do so, it is necessary to speak of an ethical metaphysical conception of religion as the means by which theology might be articulated. In such a way, one may dare pronounce the word "God" or the word "sacred" even at the risk of thematisation.

In this chapter, we have highlighted the Levinasian ideas of persecution, humiliation and the Good beyond Being. The practical application of these ideas to prayer and liturgy point to a site of ethical transcendence in which to enrich von Balthasar's theo-logic in regards to the revelation of God given in creation. In moving beyond the language of Being towards a language of alterity, the subject comes before the logos of truth in the face of the Other. In this discourse, the Word of God in the Other's face is heard. It awakens a sense of responsibility as a response to the Other and God.

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[166] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 8.
[167] See Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 181-182; Levinas *In the Time of Nations*, 114; and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, xlviii.
[168] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.
[169] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.

Responsibility for the Other, substituting for the Other's humiliation and persecution, is a response to the divine Logos through prayer and liturgy. Accordingly, the self is called to share in God's suffering and be devoted to serving the Other. Here we must take a closer look at Levinas' idea of persecuted truth for a necesssary inspiration. Following Kierkegaard, he has explained that persecution and humiliation signify the encounter with transcendent truth.[170] This ethical behaviour does not signify participation in immanence, thought and Being, but an encounter with a trace of God's proximity. Levinas writes, "But the trace is not just one more word: it is the proximity of God in the countenance of my fellowman".[171] If liturgy and prayer are to be conceived in connection with the modalities of the true, namely persecution and humiliation, then we must also consider the enigma of the trace of God's proximity. The enigma does not permit participation as that would reduce God to analogical and ontological representations in consciousness. However, the enigma commands from its immemorial past (a past more ancient than original sin) a state of passivity greater than thought and too overwhelming for consciousness to hold. Such passivity, to the point of substituting for the Other's humiliation and persecution, is found in an ethical metaphysical conception of prayer and liturgy, the very signification of the Good beyond Being.

In the realm of the Good beyond Being, liturgy and prayer express passivity towards the Other, and towards the trace of God in the Other. This amounts to an obsession with responsibility in which the subject is inspired to transcend its freedom to be in-itself and for-itself. This creates the possibility for the self to be in-the-Other and for-the-Other, as an Other "as such". In less complex terms, we can say that the trace of God in the Other commands the subject to turn itself about radically towards the life of alterity. The discourse between the subject and God by way of the Other's face is not language nor ideas available as representations of consciousness, but the sharing of God's suffering via responsibility for the Other. Therefore the subject's most available means of encountering the logos of God is prayer. In this respect, prayer transcends self-consciousness, and leads to the realm of the Good beyond Being through the liturgy of responsibility. A practical application can now be considered.

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[170] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56.
[171] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 57.

Prayer and Passivity

So far, I have presented prayer as an extreme passivity and obsession with regard to the Other. It shares in God's suffering and even assuages it. Prayer does not serve as the ontological unveiling of the subject's responsibility before God, but rather signifies passivity to the point of substituting a self-interested existence for persecution and humiliation. The Good, namely love and justice, is not in the domain of the *conatus* of Being and presence. It is aimed rather as the non-present and immemorial trace of God's proximity. If theology is going to articulate the Good beyond Being, then its first words must be those of prayer. Let us now see how this can be applied to von Balthasar's ontological articulation of truth in the world, as he writes:

> The ontological unveiling of the creature before God guarantees that the truth of this world is in fact true. Truth is the unconcealment of being, while the full notion of this unconcealment requires someone to whom it is unconcealed. This someone is God and can only be God, because not all worldly being can be revealed to every worldly subject. Because it is unveiled to God, it can also be unveiled to other subjects, without needing to be actually unveiled to them. It has its objective truth thanks to its unconcealment before the eternal subject.[172]

In von Balthasar's theo-logic, "truth is the unconcealment of being". In this chapter we have sought to argue that this position does not help resolve the deepest problem of theo-logic, that is, how the creature is a likeness and image of God. In seeking to understand the truth of the world, the theologian should not focus on those factors available to thematisation and representation; for these reduce the word "God" to thought and presence. Instead, the more authentic theological stance is found in prayer and passivity, so that ethics rather than ontology has priority. On this basis, theology speaks the language of alterity rather than that of totality. For von Balthasar, an ontological conception of truth leads to the creature's receiving through the divine unconcealment of Being. When divine truth is reduced to the scope of human objectivity and to the plane of presence, the subject is not free to confess its destiny to be what God wills it to be - as von Balthasar contends.[173] Hence, the subject's self-consciousness is not the place and time to determine the meaning of God's truth. That

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[172] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 269.
[173] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 269-270.

can only be found in the Good beyond Being, as it approached through prayer and passivity towards the Other.

If it is possible for the subject to share in God's suffering by way of substituting for the Other's persecution and humiliation, truth is not so much the "persecuted truth" of Kierkegaard and Levinas stress, but the kenosis of God through prayer and passivity. To think otherwise than von Balthasar's ontological idea of truth is to pray and respond to God's kenosis. In its passivity towards the Other, prayer is not caught up in the ontological play of veiling and unveiling, but opens to the truth of the world as an encounter with God's kenosis. This leads to a theo-logic of another kind. Von Balthasar's understanding of the destiny of the subject as found in confessing what God wills it to be, is more appropriately articulated as the prayerful otherness of encounter with the divine kenosis.

Conclusion: The Truth of the World

This chapter has focused upon von Balthasar's and Levinas' ideas of truth and how Levinas' ideas might be imported to some extent into von Balthasar's philosophical inquiry into God's revelation in creation. We began by introducing von Balthasar's theological logical theory in relation to the thought of Husserl, Heidegger and Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* proved to be of special importance, since it exercised considerable influence on the development of Levinas' ethical metaphysics. Rosenzweig's thought, although shattering the idea of totality, is nevertheless another form of ontology. In Levinas' writings I discovered ideas approaching the limits of phenomenology.

I then proceeded to consider von Balthasar's idea of truth as participation in *Theo-Logic Vol. I.* My focus was to challenge the analogy of Being, appresentation and the idea of truth as the unconcealedness of Being. Accordingly, I have differed from Derrida, Ward and Purcell because they considered that Levinas' idea of the Good still has analogical implications. Hence, for example, whilst Purcell concentrated on Rahner and ended with a re-discovery of analogy, my examination of von Balthasar's theology lead to a re-discovery of the dramatic revelation-drama through the idea of the Good beyond Being.

Accordingly, I argued that von Balthasar's use of the analogy of Being cannot help him to answer the deepest problem to be faced by a theo-logic. In his analysis on the truth of the world, he makes the creature's openness before God the sole *a priori* of ethics. This is an ontological state that lifts the creature "to the heights of holiness".[174] But here, von Balthasar's theological logical theory would have greater force if it began with an ethical metaphysical conception of truth. For that reason, we developed Levinas' idea of the Good beyond Being as the place and time of God's logos. This lead to a consideration of prayer and liturgy in the service of the Other.

Following the establishment of prayer and liturgy as a viable example of ethical transcendence in which the truth of God's Word might be heard, I referred to the extreme Levinasian states of passivity and obsession. This would entail that the relation of the subject towards the Other is one of overwhelming passivity and obsession to substitute for the Other's persecution and humiliation. The passivity of responsibility did not merely characterise a subject's radical turn about before the Other. Its significance lay especially in its non-reducibility to objectivity, presence and Being. But suggesting that passivity and prayer signified the truth of the world in the encounter with God's kenosis, I moved beyond Kierkegaard's and Levinas' idea of truth as a persecuted truth, to truth as an encounter with God's kenosis in the space and time of responsibility for the Other. This position, we argued, undermined von Balthasar's theology of "ontological unveiling". With the site of transcendence no longer occupied by ontological and analogical structures, the subject could begin to acknowledge and confess what God wills it to be through the concordance of prayer and passivity, that is, responsibility for the Other through the encounter with God's kenosis.

The purpose of this chapter is part of the overall concern of this thesis, namely a re-conception of Trinitarian *praxis*. This will be explicitly addressed in the following and final chapter. Differing from Levinas in this respect, I strove to speak of the convergence between theology and ethical metaphysics. Unlike von Balthasar also, I have set out to resituate theology outside the foundations of ontology and presence.

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[174] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 270.

The effort to re-think von Balthasar's theo-logic opens the way to consider an ethical-theological *praxis* in the light of Levinas' philosophy.

Chapter 6 Trinitarian Praxis

Introduction

The chapter sets out to establish a Trinitarian *praxis* within the language of alterity. It reproaches Purcell's "Ethical Trinitarian Theology", Ford's "Theology of Being Transformed", and Barnes' "Theology of Dialogue" for being too indebted to phenomenology and ontology, and in so doing misrepresenting the thought of Levinas. It then seeks to conceive of a Trinitarian *praxis* by way of recontextualising von Balthasar's analysis of eschatological existence and the soteriological dimensions of the eucharist in the place and time of ethical transcendence.

Von Balthasar is not considered a systematic theologian in the usual sense. Breaking from the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition of substance-based metaphysics (essentialist ontology), his theology takes up the "postmodern" concern to re-think the logos of reason and Being. Rather than absolutising rational articulations of divine Being, he places an emphasis on aesthetic, relational and personalist categories. In this way, he re-discovers and enhances the scholastic ontological understanding of Being and its transcendental qualities of the beautiful, the good and true. For him, Christ is the analogy of Being *par excellence*, the very access to the mystery of the Trinity.[1] Christ's glory in the Paschal Mystery is indivisible from the beauty, goodness, truth of God.[2] This suggests that in the act of faith, the perception of Christ's splendour and form in the Paschal Mystery takes priority over human experience, that is, the acts of belief and understanding.[3]

Granted that the "theological act of perception"[4] is awakened by divine love, that is, the sending of the Son to expiate for our sins (1 John 4:10), such light of faith must be subject to some level of intentional experience. After all, the thematisation of faith in dogma is but a partial knowledge of God's infinite Being. Von Balthasar's analogical understanding of God privileges presence, the fact of Being. Even though he interprets Absolute Being (*Actus Purus Ipsum Esse*) as the phenomenon of love

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[1] See Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery. A Development in Recent Catholic Theology*, New Theology Studies 5 (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 57-59, 82-89, 142, 178.
[2] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242-243.
[3] See Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 152.
[4] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 155.

(*Actus Purus Ipsum Amare*), an ontological phenomenology is still evident.[5] Moreover, it seems to me that there is still a focus on the essence of Being. Essence is not conceived as a "substance" in the abstract Augustinian-Thomistic sense, but more as relational: an indissoluble perichoresis between the philosophical and theological transcendental qualities of Being. The beauty, goodness and truth of Christ's obedience to the Father's will in the Spirit manifest God's glory, "the unique ray of the divine majesty of love".[6]

As an alternative to von Balthasar's analogical style of theological thinking, I have argued for Levinas' ethical metaphysics as a more appropriate perspective. Up to this point, I have set out to investigate which particular terms in Levinas' lexicon might find a place in the language of Christian theology, with special reference to von Balthasar's trilogy of theological aesthetics, theo-drama and theo-logic. While there is often confusion and ambiguity in his style of thought, Levinas has enabled me to challenge certain Husserlian and Heideggerian influences in von Balthasar's theology, namely, Husserl's idea of representation and Heidegger's ideas of Being and truth. To this degree, I have taken issue with von Balthasar's re-conceptualisation of ontology and phenomenology. Let us review the position so far.

For von Balthasar, the Spirit and Christian *eros* together make it possible to see the form of God's Being in Christ.[7] Behind such a view is the priority von Balthasar gives to the phenomenon of the beautiful. In this site of theological aesthetics, the subject experiences transcendence as a presence, objectified as the beauty of God's Being in Christ. Knowledge of the Being of eternal triune love must begin with a perception of its form and splendour in Christ. In contrast, I have argued that God's transcendence is not an experience in the sense of *Erfahren, Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*, but rather an encounter by way of alterity. Hence, in Chapter Three von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics, I placed a priority on the good rather than the beautiful. Furthermore, by drawing from Levinas' idea of otherness (the trace of *illeity*), I conceived that the idea of Christ's Otherness is an alternative to the analogy of the

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[5] See Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 82.
[6] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.
[7] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 119-121.

transcendentals for understanding God's glory on Holy Saturday and in the Resurrection.

In Chapter Four, I began by challenging the analogy between the Spirit and a twofold face. The analogy puts forward the idea of Trinitarian and soteriological Inversion, that is, the Spirit's operation of the Son's humanity. I found that the analogy spoke of how, for reasons of salvation history, the Spirit must veil Christ's 'I-consciousness' (*processio*) from his 'mission-consciousness' (*missio*). Noting the language of totality in evidence at this point, I argued that we must articulate the unity between Christ's *processio* and *missio* through the language of alterity. From here, inspired by Levinas' ideas of maternity and exposure to the Other's poverty and suffering, I presented Christ's "I-consciousness" as "I-maternity" and Christ's "mission-consciousness" as "the exposure of mission". The goal here was to articulate Christ's *processio* and *missio* in terms otherwise than its dramatisation in consciousness. This is not to reject the idea of consciousness, but to emphasise that Christ transcends consciousness through being obedient to the Father in the Spirit.

I also pointed to von Balthasar's conception of theo-drama as first theology. In contrast, I introduced the idea of ethical metaphysics as first theology, that is, theology beyond the constraints of objectivity, presence and Being. To continue such a development, I found on the one hand that both the theological themes of "gift-as-given" and "Christ's *processio*" refer to the Son's generation. On the other, I found that those of "gift-as-received" and "Christ's *mission*" refer to the Son's kenosis, obedience and thanksgiving. Accordingly, I set about to develop von Balthasar's theology of gift in the context of Trinitarian Inversion by means of the Levinasian notion of "having a sense". Only Christ's self-gift can be the basis of the meaning of the word, "God". Genuine theological thought entails conformity to the Other-directed Christ, that is, by living beyond the absorbing effects of ego-consciousness and its care for Being.

In Chapter Five, I confined myself to *Theo-Logic Vol. I The Truth of the World* and proceeded to compare and contrast von Balthasar's ideas of truth and Being with Husserl's, Heidegger's and Rosenzweig's own conceptions. Upon citing the idea of alterity in Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*, I referred to Levinas development of it

and how it might challenge the analogy of Being, the analogy of appresentation and also the idea of truth as the unconcealedness of Being. Most of the chapter was taken up in arguing against von Balthasar's use of the analogy of Being, so as to disclose the deepest problem to be faced by a theo-logic, namely giving the ethical priority over the ontological. To this end, I appealed to Levinas' ideas of the Good beyond Being (by way of critically reviewing Ward's and Purcell's interpretation) and of the modalities of the true, namely humiliation and persecution. This meant arguing against the reduction of God's logos to an encompassing presence in consciousness.

In an effort to locate ethics as first theology, I argued that von Balthasar's theological logical theory could appropriately be brought into contact with Levinas' ideas of prayer and passivity, as these marked the place and time in which the subject might encounter the truth of God's logos. At this point, the difficulties inherent in von Balthasar's dependence on the analogy of Being were brought to light. It followed that, once the site of transcendence was cleared of the structures of ontological and analogical thought, the subject could encounter God's kenosis, the Good beyond Being, through prayer and passivity.

In short, an authentic theology needs to think in terms otherwise than analogical thought if it is to have a proper philosophical basis. Previous chapters have led us to give ethical transcendence the priority in theological thought. In this final chapter, I want to demonstrate the position more closely. Levinas teaches that discourse is otherwise than Being and that it begins from and for the person. From this pivotal insight, a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis* can be developed, in our understanding of theology in the site of ethical metaphysics. In other words, this final chapter will set out to engage the language of theology with ethical transcendence rather than ontology and experience. This will lead to a theology understood as truly Christian, i.e., deriving from an encounter with Christ and with the Other in Christ. The person of Christ is neither a system of totality nor even a personal experience.

In this context, two major challenges must be faced. First, to think in terms otherwise than the language of totality; and secondly, in opposition to Levinas, the need to conceive of ethics as not only first philosophy, but also first theology. Despite Levinas' reluctance to speak of theology, there is one isolated instance in which he

does refer to ethics as first theology. Addressing the underlying ethical principle of the Bible, he writes:

> Holiness thus shows itself as an irreducible possibility of the human and God: being called by man. An original ethical event which would also be first theology. Thus ethics is no longer a simple moralism of rules which decree what is virtuous. It is the original awakening of an I responsible for the other; the accession of my person to the uniqueness of the I called and elected to responsibility for the other.[8]

It is extraordinary for Levinas to speak of theology in this way. These words allow for the possibility of theology being enriched by the language of alterity, albeit one that concords with holiness. Admittedly, Levinas did not pursue this line of thought. Nevertheless, he makes mention of "an original ethical event" in which holiness and theology might coincide. In this regard, his conception of holiness[9] parallels the Trinitarian *praxis* I wish to develop. Michael Purcell, in his article, "Leashing God with Levinas: Tracing a Trinity with Levinas", has made the first approach to connect Levinas' thought and the Trinity.[10] Furthermore, both David Ford and Michael Barnes, in their writings of *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* and *Theology and Dialogue of Religions* respectively, have begun developing the connection between Levinas' thought and a Christian perspective on *praxis*. Accordingly, before presenting a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*, let us first examine the contribution of these eminent scholars, beginning with Purcell.

Purcell's Ethical Trinitarian Theology[11]

Purcell introduces his article on the Trinity by referring to Levinas' question regarding "the apparition at the Oak of Mamre"[12] (Gen 18:1-2): 'When Abraham receives the three visitors, does he receive the Lord because of the trinity which the visitors prefigure or because of his hospitality?'[13] Levinas is responding to Paul Claudel's Christian appropriation of the Old Testament, particularly to the idea of prefigurement. For Levinas, Claudel's Christian exegesis exemplifies how theology

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[8] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 182.
[9] See also Chapter Two, pp.32,37.
[10] See Michael Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas: Tracing a Trinity with Levinas," *The Heythrop Journal* XL (July, 1999), 301-318.
[11] The following section has been edited from my article, "A Critical Review of Michael Purcell's Theological Development of Levinas' Philosophy," *The Heythrop Journal* (April, 2003), 159-163.
[12] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 301.
[13] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 301. The quote comes from Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 121.

contaminates Sacred History, "managing to shock us as Jews, and driving us away from the old Testament".[14] Purcell seeks to take up Levinas' criticisms of theology by developing their connection to the ethical, noting that ethics complements theology. He wishes to argue: "... that an ethical reading of the encounter is not necessarily at odds with a theological reading".[15] He has importantly brought out how Levinas' ethical metaphysics may be developed theologically. The access to God is not only in ethics, but also in theology. Even though he is aware of the contaminating effects of onto-theology in the Levinasian sense and seeks to address them, it must be remembered that Purcell returns to an ethical-ontological basis for theology by arguing for "the goodness of Being" and by criticising Levinas for separating "the Good" from "Being".[16]

In Purcell's article on the Trinity, there is some evidence to suggest that he is trying to Christianise Levinas' thought. He uses the metaphor of "leash"[17] to emphasise the importance of appropriating Levinas' thought for Trinitarian theology. For him, "leash" has a double sense, namely, firstly, to harness Levinas' thought,[18] and secondly, to link God together, "especially in threes".[19] But, Purcell is clear in his intention: "But, going beyond Levinas, we wish to attempt a theology of the Trinity".[20] In spite of any negative connation to the analogy of "leashing", his appropriation of Levinas' thought is an important starting point for developing Trinitarian theology ethically.

Purcell has provided a foundation for "tracing a Trinity with Levinas" by emphasising Levinas' phenomenology of human existence and his notion of "*illeity*".[21] In short, he adopts the following principles from Levinas' thought for developing "an ethical theology of the Trinity": First, the reality of ethical subjectivity is the possession of a moral consciousness. Second, the *illeity* of the Other sustains the ethical relation.

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[14] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 121.
[15] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 301.
[16] See Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 329.
[17] "**leash**, *lēsh, n.* a line for holding hawk or hound: - control by a leash, or as if by a leash: *a set of three. v.t.* to hold by a leash: to bind (*The Oxford English Dictionary*)." Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 301.
[18] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 317.
[19] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 303.
[20] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 304.
[21] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 313.

Third, that the anonymity of *illeity*, namely "the third who is in our midst", affirms the possibility of justice for all humanity. Finally, as the Other's face signifies humanity as a whole and the trace of God, the Other is a likeness of God's irreducible and incomprehensible mystery.[22]

Taking these principles in mind, Purcell asks: "Can we leash God ethically? Can we 'think' God in terms of ethical rather than ontological *hypostases*? Can we unleash God from the ontological ties which bind him, and of which Levinas is critical, yet none the less *leash* him ethically in his trinitarian self?"[23] The aim is to "attempt a theological appropriation of the ethical hypostasis".[24] He begins to leash God ethically by emphasising "the *liturgical nature of God*".[25] Here, Purcell is drawing on Levinas' notion of liturgy (a devoted openness to serve) as the "one-for-the Other"[26] in order to stress moral consciousness at the centre of God's ethical subjectivity. In Trinitarian terms, this is understood as the Father-being-for-the Son and the Son-being-for-the-Father. He therefore concludes, "The divine nature (*ousia*) is the ethical reality of 'for-the-other'".[27] Therefore, God's divine nature manifests an ethical reality or, in a sense, an infinite liturgy of a self-relating God. Purcell's task is to reflect ethically and theologically upon the notion of *hypostasis* and its connection with *ousia*.

Even though the three divine persons (hypostases) share the same divine nature, they "remain distinct, unconfused, and absolute in respect to one another".[28] To bring this out, Purcell utilises Levinas' notion of "absolution" emphasising how the Other (*Autrui*) as other (*autre*) is absolute and thereby able to relate distinctly without being confused with the self. Here, the *illeity* of the Other sustains the ethical relation. In Trinitarian terms, Purcell writes:

> In other words, the relationship between the Father and the Son is not the same as the relationship between the Son and the Father. The Father and the Son are the same in that they are essentially 'for-the-other'. Yet, the Son's relation to the

[22] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 313-314.
[23] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 314.
[24] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 314.
[25] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 315.
[26] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 302.
[27] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 315.
[28] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 315.

> Father is responsive, whereas the Father's relation to the Son is initiative or originary. Thus, there is both an identity yet a non-identification of Father and Son. Or again, since responsibility is the ethical hypostasis of 'the-other-person-in me', might we also say that the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father (cf. John 14:10,11), in a non-identical way, and that it is precisely this *perichoresis* of the one in the Other which constitutes the hypostasis of each? That each is 'in-the-Other' points to the unity of essence, but that each remains absolute despite the relation points also to the difference between the persons, where the *between* is not only the relations but also the difference to the other.[29]

The hypostases of the Father and Son are brought to light in a way that shows how each mutually indwells in each other "in a non-identical way". Importantly, Purcell has brought out the difference between the Father and Son. Even though each possesses the same divine essence or nature, the difference is exemplified by their different state of dwelling in each other. The Father's ethical dwelling-in-the-Son is active whereas the Son's dwelling-in-the-Father is more passive. Therefore, the Father and Son "remain distinct, unconfused and absolute" whilst bearing the same divine nature as "for-the-other".

In regards to the Spirit, Purcell, although he does not state it explicitly, uses Levinas' notion of the idea of the "infinite-in-me", which he interprets as "the turgescence of excessive responsibility within the self".[30] He identifies the Holy Spirit as the Father and Son's mutual relation of excessive responsibility: "Might we, then, proceed by saying that the relation between Father and Son is one of excessive responsibility, which not only involves an absolute distinction between the one and the other, but also a responsibility which is absolute and total?"[31]

The Spirit is described in the context of the "absolute and total" giving of the Father and Son. Proceeding, therefore, from both the Father and Son, the Spirit completes the liturgical drama in God: "Thus, in keeping with the liturgical nature of God, we would have as our trinitarian model the leash of the Father who is utterly 'for-the-Son', the Son who is utterly 'for-the-Father', and the Spirit who is the turgescence of responsibility between them."[32]

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[29] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 315-316.
[30] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 316.
[31] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 316.
[32] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 316.

Emanating from this liturgical drama in the immanent Trinity is the Christological drama of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery. Purcell seeks to link the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity by emphasising that the ethical reality of the Triune God finds its expression in the world through justice. This implies that the dramas of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery signify God's grace of divine justice and portray "an understanding of God in himself as response and responsibility". [33] This is where Purcell's analysis ends. Significant parts of Levinas' thought have been enriched ethically and theologically in pursuing a theology of the Trinity.

Purcell admits that his work on the Trinity needs to be developed further as he has "simply opened up some pathways in the Christian mystery of God".[34] Nevertheless, a crucial starting point has been made for "tracing a Trinity with Levinas". However, having brought out Levinas' notion of "*illeity*", could he not have brought it out more explicitly in a Trinitarian context of Christian living? Even though Purcell includes a eucharistic context in his interpretation of Levinas' notion of the Other in *Mystery and Method*, he does not articulate the Other as Christ: "In celebrating the Eucharistic memorial, then, the Church does not command the presence of Christ, but enters into a Eucharistic time which unfolds from the Other, a time which is not only liturgical, in Levinas' sense of the word, but opens to *diakonia*."[35] Purcell has hesitated to understand Christ as the Divine or archetypal Other, and perhaps rightly so, because it may be a leap that requires further thought. As a result, he tends to ignore a possible Christological dimension of the Other. Admittedly, in his philosophy, there are other ways of signifying the Divine such as "the third". In his explicit and later treatment of the Trinity he does refer to Levinas' notion of "the third",[36] but fails to develop it to Trinitarian faith.

In the following section, I will identify the eucharist and the experience of transformation as it develops from Ford's and Barnes' conceptions of "*habitus*", that is, "the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, or the more practical dispositions of generous welcome and hospitality to the other".[37] Barnes' idea of Christian *habitus*

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[33] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 317.
[34] Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 317.
[35] Purcell, *Mystery and Method*, 269.
[36] See Purcell, "Leashing God with Levinas," 314.
[37] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 204.

highlights the experience of being altered, made other, through interfaith dialogue.[38] In contrast, Ford has revised the term, "Christian *habitus*", to conceive of the term, "Eucharistic *habitus*," in the sense of a "multi-dimensional 'habitus'", formed through integrating the eucharist with all areas of life.[39] Despite the debt to Levinas, these authors cannot conceive of the possibility of developing both theology and ethics beyond the limits of ontology and phenomenology.[40] Because their ideas of Christian and eucharistic *habitus* are expressed in the language of totality and personal experience, we will distinguish Trinitarian *praxis* from these views, in that it looks to explicit expression in the language of alterity. Being more than an idea, Trinitarian *praxis* goes beyond theory, understanding and even the thematisation of practical commitment. Let us now look first at Ford's conception of the Christian life.

Ford's Theology of Being Transformed

The eucharist and eschatology are key themes in any theology of Christian existence. Ford had placed special emphasis on the eucharist and the self's transformation. Although he has not forgotten the eschatological connection, it has more of a supportive role in his reflections on the eucharist in the life of the Church.[41] In contrast, von Balthasar has spoken of both eucharist and eschatology at length.[42]

Let us consider the role of the eucharist. The eucharistic prayers contain the liturgical acts of praise and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), acclamation, the calling down of the Spirit (*epiclesis*), the Last Supper narrative, remembrance (*anamnesis*), sacrifice, intercessions and doxology.[43] Accordingly, we have eight acts preceding the reception of the body and blood of Christ in holy communion. Given the centrality of the eucharist in Christian self-understanding and its transformation, it is not surprising

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[38] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 139 and Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 204.
[39] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 10, 140.
[40] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267 and Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 97.
[41] Ford writes: "Salvation seen through the figure of feasting suggests an eschatology of selfhood". See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267.
[42] For example, see von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. 1*, 572-575 and von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 485-583.
[43] See Vatican II Council, "The General Instruction on the Roman Missal," para. 54-5, in A. Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vatican Collection Volume 1, Revised Edition, (Northport NY: Costello Publishing Co. 1988), 175-6. Para. 55 of the "General Instruction" names the constituent parts of the Eucharist Prayer as follows: "(a) *Thanksgiving*," "(b) *Acclamation*," "(c) *Epiclesis*," "(d) *The Institution Narrative and Consecration*," "(e) *Anamnesis*," "(f) *Oblation*," "(g) *Intercessions*" and
"(h) *Doxology*".

that both Ford and Barnes have appealed to Levinasian sources to further their respective understandings of the self in transformation. Ford, by treating the Last Supper as "a meal in the face of death", seeks to develop an aesthetics and ethics of feasting.[44] In contrast, Barnes highlights doxology and its relation to life and experience.

Ford works with the analogy of joyful obligation as means to describe what he terms, "the worshipping self".[45] Here he is indebted to both "Levinas's prophetic philosophy of responsibility and Jüngel's joyful risking theology".[46] Using Jüngel as a means to think "the unthought" in Levinas, namely joy, Ford asks:

> I now want to open a further dimension by asking a question of Levinas: in his conception of the 'I' separate in enjoyment, vulnerable and suffering in substitution, with the face of the other calling the self from separation to limitless responsibility, what happens if one introduces a conception of joy as extreme as the conception of responsibility?[47]

Ford argues that there is "a glimpse" of joy found in Levinas' writings.[48] It is akin to Levinas' notion of "enjoyment" and further present in Franz Rosenzweig's "*The Star of Redemption*".[49] In this regard, he takes up Jüngel's conception of joy to make a case of "'thinking the unthought' in Levinas".[50] So that he also might "do justice" to the concept of "the worshipping self" (the analogy of joyful obligation), he appeals to Levinas' friend and dialogue partner, Paul Ricoeur.[51] Taking up Ricoeur's idea "that in biblical faith 'love is tied to the "naming of God"'",[52] he suggests that biblical faith intensifies and transforms the determinations of "the worshipping self".[53] Hence, in view of such a biblical perspective, it is not surprising Ford is also influenced by the presentation of the eucharist in John's Gospel. Indeed, he identifies John the

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[44] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 146, 267-270.
[45] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 82.
[46] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 82.
[47] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 74.
[48] Ford writes: "In *Totality and Infinity* a discussion of Descartes leads to one of Levinas's most eloquent affirmations of God in terms of personal relations with an other who is a 'Majesty approached as a face' and evokes 'admiration, adoration, and joy'. In *Otherwise than Being* the culminating statement about the exorbitant overflow of the caress of love plays a variation on the same theme, and both works have other hints of joy". See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 74.
[49] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 76.
[50] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 76.
[51] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 82.
[52] See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 25.
[53] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 98.

Evangelist as, "... a Levinasian figure obsessed with the joyful responsibility of obeying the imperative to love".[54]

For Ford, the notions of the "eucharist" and "the self" take priority. The eucharist is "a condensation of the Christian habitus" for it impacts upon all dimensions of life.[55] Accordingly, the self "embodies a multi-dimensional 'habitus', formed through repeated celebration of the eucharist and interweaving with the rest of life".[56] In the development of a "eucharistic habitus", Ford identifies four aspects of, what he terms, "a eucharistic self". It is blessed, placed, timed and commanded.[57] It is not clear how Levinas' conception of responsibility beyond Being enters into Ford's analysis. The four aspects of the self he refers to are more explanations of personal reality and experience in a eucharistic setting. Certainly, Ford employs Levinasian categories ("being faced" and commanded in the encounter with the Other) but not in accord with their original sense. For example he writes: "Above all, being timed by the eucharist relativises death, and liberates for the ethical, fasting and festal time of responsibility and joy before the crucified and risen Jesus".[58] He seems more indebted to the analogy of Being and the language of experience in this respect. This is because such "fasting and festal time of responsibility and joy" are practical forms of consciousness as Ford implies: "What will help most in acquiring the [eucharistic] habitus? At the practical level, the answer is obvious: practice".[59] Admittedly, Ford is concerned with developing a practice that is "theologically informed".[60] In contrast, Levinas is concerned with developing a sense of ethical transcendence that is "anarchically" informed. In other words, responsibility for the neighbour precedes the practice and commitment because the self has been commanded since time immemorial.[61] It seems to me that Ford seeks to liberate the Levinasian idea of facing with a eucharistic aesthetics, thereby reducing it to onto-theology.

In his final chapter of *Self and Salvation*, Ford devotes himself to exploring the aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, hermeneutics and spirituality of feasting. Like von

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[54] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 162.
[55] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 140.
[56] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 10.
[57] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 162.
[58] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 164.
[59] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 165.
[60] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 165.
[61] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 120.

Balthasar, Ford places a priority not only on analogical thought but also on aesthetics. For Ford, the "figure of feasting"[62] is the lens by which salvation suggests the relation between selfhood and eschatology. Beginning with aesthetics, he also ends with aesthetics by speaking of the "pure joy" and "infinite felicity" of feasting.[63] His emphasis on the aesthetics of feasting is apparent when he writes:

> All the senses are engaged in a good feast. We taste, touch, smell, see, hear. Salvation as health is here vividly physical. Anything that heals and enhances savouring the world through the senses may feed into a salvation that culminates in feasting. From prayer for healing, and all the skills of medicine, through the accumulated wisdom of traditions of cookery, wine-making and brewing, to the experiences and habits which refine our sensual discriminations and enjoyments, the requirements of full feasting draw us deeper into appreciation of our embodiment.[64]

Like von Balthasar, Ford sets out to first conceptualise the self's experience of God through an aestheticisation of consciousness. But this position is closed to an essential Levinasian perspective, because where Ford is emphasising the self's experience through its senses, Levinas is always looking to the encounter with the Other. Even though Ford later acknowledges Levinas' idea of extreme responsibility, he conceives of it otherwise through the idea of extreme joy.[65] In this way, Ford gives aesthetics priority in theology. Indicating how aesthetics, ethics and metaphysics converge in "a *fête du sens*, a feast of meaning,"[66] Ford writes:

> To envisage the ultimate feasting is to imagine an endless overflow of communication between those who love and enjoy each other. It embraces body language, facial expresses, the ways we eat, drink, toast, dance and sin; and accompanying every course, encounter and artistic performance are conversations taken up into celebration.[67]

In this regard, Ford does not take full account of Levinas' idea of alterity, and is not open to the possibilities of theological thinking in ways that are not dependent on analogy and the ontology of presence. As a result, his eucharistic theology of transformation relies on an onto-theological conception of the self's transformation.

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[62] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267.
[63] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 266-280.
[64] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267.
[65] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 275.
[66] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 271.
[67] Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 271.

It is appeals to analogies of presence and relies on the language of personal experience. Hence, Ford's figure of feasting and its grounding in aesthetics is more an expression of the self's search for the experience of salvation. It has yet to give full recognition to the Other's hunger for justice and the encounter with the person of Christ.

Barnes' Theology of Dialogue

Barnes' theology of dialogue is likewise influenced by Levinas. Barnes is aware of Levinas' lack of interest in giving practical examples of ethical relations. More radically, he questions "his project" of defending subjectivity and giving a non-totalising account of alterity: "The question, however, is whether his project enables him to defend subjectivity *and* establish a non-totalising account of alterity, or whether it just leaves him locked within the polarities of the same and the other".[68] He considers it impossible to avoid the language of totality when speaking of ethics. Accordingly, he describes Levinas' work as a "project"; for the word evokes a sense of totality, a system and the subjective horizons represented in consciousness. In contrast, a more appropriate description would be that of "philosophical discourse". Levinas has in fact distinguished his thought from the idea of the self having mastery over a project.[69]

Indeed, it would seem that Barnes uses the language of totality, not only to understand the Christian vocation, but also to understand Levinas' thought, as when he employs Levinas' idea of relationship with the Other, he must eventually betray it to Being. For example, in his conclusion, he speaks of theology of dialogue as a response in which the infinite horizon of the creature's "Being" is equated with God. He writes:

> My subject has been the experience of relationality, the properly relational experience of Christian faith in the self-revealing God. 'God is known', as Lash says, 'by participating in that movement which he is. And it is this participation which constitutes the reality, the life and history, of everything that is'. To that extent, all theology is a response to that dialogue which God initiates. But it is also properly heterological: a response to the otherness of God who alone can enable the other to speak. Understood in this way, an ethical meeting of persons and as

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[68] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 95, 97.
[69] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 101, 184.

> much a moment of God's self-revelation as liturgy and prayer, dialogue opens the partners without limit towards that Infinite horizon of their being which is God.[70]

In this sense, Barnes' theology of dialogue emphasises the importance of the personal experience of being *altered* or made other through the mystery of Christ's continuing presence. Earlier, in relation to, "The task for a Christian theology of dialogue," Barnes expressed: "The question is not, therefore, how Christians can find a way of including the other within a single story, still less a theological scheme, but whether they can discern in their own experience of being *altered* – made other – something of the mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection".[71] For Barnes, the idea of experience signifies a response to God's Otherness. But in Levinasian terms, such experience is perhaps more a thematisation, rather than a radical and humble passivity in the face of the Other. For such experience could signify the fact of Being, that is, the ego restricting the Other to the terms of its own experience.[72] In Barnes' emphasis on the self's transformation, it becomes clear that the "Christian *habitus*"[73] is grounded in the personal, ethical experience of "being *altered*", that is, practical consciousness and its thematisation in the goodness of Being. This suggests that Barnes' theological quest is first ontological rather than "ethical-metaphysical" because he grounds the Christian's "Being" in the "Being" of God: "... dialogue opens the partners without limit towards that Infinite horizon of their being which is God". Furthermore, one could well question, with Heidegger and Levinas, whether Barnes might confuse the "Being" of the Christian with the "Being" of God.[74]

While Barnes departs from Levinas' conception of Being and experience, he nevertheless makes good use of some Levinasian categories. Indeed, despite his fundamental difficulty with Levinas' thesis, he gives a number of insightful reflections on how Levinas' ideas of for-the-other, passivity, prayer and liturgy might be assimilated in a eucharistic theology. For example, in his recovery of the liturgical nature of theology, he employs the notion of relationship, "for-the-other", in a Levinasian sense, and singles out doxology as the concrete starting point for a

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[70] Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 254.
[71] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 204, 254.
[72] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 151 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 157.
[73] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 204.
[74] For a discussion on the onto-theology, see Leora Batnitzky, "Jewish Philosophy after Metaphysics," in Wrathall (ed.), *Religion after Metaphysics*, 148.

Christian *habitus*.[75] He argues that the eucharist, as liturgical practice, prevents any totalising attempts on the part of theology to comprehend the Other. Despite Barnes' tendency to thematise the experience of God's otherness by reflecting "on a people's life and experience which begins with doxology",[76] it is clear that he is aware of the Levinasian strictures against thematisation and reducing the Other to the Same: "The Christian liturgy is never a neat and finished process, a mechanism for capturing the Word in a formula of words. As Levinas goes on warning us, every attempt to close the 'gap' between same and other risks betrayal, the act of Saying becoming encased in the Said".[77] In this regard, Barnes admits that, "... it is impossible to speak of a relationship with what is other without dropping back into the language of totality".[78]

Both Ford and Barnes are examples of a Christian reading of Levinas. It remains, however, that theology must address the limitations of identifying both God and the Christian *habitus* with Being and presence. Barnes' theology of dialogue ultimately focuses more on the personal experience of alterity rather than the non-phenomenality of encountering Christ and the Other in Christ. Whereas von Balthasar and Ford place a priority on the transcendental of the beautiful, Barnes gives priority to the transcendental of the good. In this, both must take for granted the analogy of Being. In contrast to Ford and Barnes, I argue that theology can be enriched by a language of alterity. Hence, I do not want to conceive of Trinitarian *praxis* by way of experience, namely the experience of feasting or of being made an Other, but to signify it in the place and time of ethical transcendence.

Prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *Praxis*

We come, then, to what we have been calling "a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*". It is to be developed in the site of alterity, beyond the language of totality and presence. A first step will be the examination of von Balthasar's theology of the eucharist and of eschatological existence.

In von Balthasar's theology of the eucharist, we find the following:

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[75] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 196, 198-202.
[76] Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 198.
[77] See Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 204.
[78] Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 97.

> In the eucharistic surrender of Jesus' humanity the point is reached, where, through his flesh, the triune God has been put at man's disposal in this final readiness on God's part to be taken and incorporated into men. Applied to the Church this means that, in the end, every exercise of the ecclesial reality is a realization (in Newman's sense) of this event, which has occurred before the Church has come to be: the ecclesial cult is, in essence, a *memoriale passionis Domini*. This cult is a meditation in retrospect on the event which in the first place constitutes the Church, the outpouring of the bodily-spiritual reality of Jesus as the Son of the Father, his release from the confinement of his earthly individuality into the social reality of the Church, which arises only from Jesus' outpouring of self.[79]

The passage assumes that the Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery, the Trinity and the social reality of the Church enter in their respective ways into the meaning of the eucharist. Jesus' outpouring of self in obedience to the Father's will expresses Christ's alterity or kenosis. The eucharistic cult signifies ethical transcendence as the realisation or continuing enactment of Christ's self-giving. Yet the problem remains: we cannot speak of such transcendence as an immanent form of knowledge in consciousness. Indeed, if we are going to give rational expression to the *memoriale passionis Domini*, then we must encounter it in the space and time of Jesus' outpouring of self. This will serve to counter any form of theological imperialism or dogmatic violence in regard to the Other – as, say, it is represented in Judaism and other religions.

While von Balthasar relates eucharistic worship to Jesus' outpouring of self, there is also the eschatological dimension to be considered. Both Ford and Barnes are aware of this dimension in the Church's eucharistic self-understanding.[80] The same is clearly the case for von Balthasar.[81] The Christian *habitus*, or corporate way of life, is not only eucharistic, but also eschatological. Can these two major elements of a Christian *habitus* be approached in a way not limited to analogy and experience?

Barnes has argued that doxology is the starting point for a Christian *habitus*, and Ford has singled out the Last Supper. But rather than any of the eight elements of the eucharistic prayer as a starting point, it is better to consider a site of ethical transcendence in which the meaning of this prayer as a whole might be signified. To name one of the elements as a starting point, is to revert to a reductive discourse of

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[79] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 572.
[80] See Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267 and Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, 252.
[81] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 494-495, 507.

presence. *The General Instruction on the Roman Missal* #54 states that the meaning of the eucharistic prayer is for the faithful to unite themselves together with Christ in praising God's wonderful works and in offering sacrifice.[82] We can interpret this statement in a Levinasian sense, in a site beyond the event of Being, especially in reference to 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 which is not the language of totality, but that of ethical transcendence. In 2 Cor 6:8-10, St. Paul writes of the paradoxes which the servant of God must face in accepting God's grace:

> ... in honour and dishonour, in all repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see – we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Commenting on this passage, von Balthasar explains that the paradoxes of vv.8-10 have their root in the Cross and Resurrection. He concedes that there is no easy resolution, for they signify the breakthrough into the realm of God's glory, into that eschatological order which parallels the break with Judaism.[83] This is to say that ecclesial and eschatological existence must, in the same manner that the Trinitarian event supersedes the Old Testament partnership between God and the Jewish people, be located within the activity of God. This suggests a notion of transcendence based on being made one in Christ (Gal 3:28). However, such a notion is betrayed to thematisation, namely its comparison with the idea of "the Old Testament partnership ... superseded by the Trinitarian event"[84]. In contrast to von Balthasar's distinction between Christianity and Judaism, Levinas identifies "one common destiny" evoked by a sense of alterity:

> "In the eyes of these crowds who do not take sacred history as their frame of reference, are we Jews and Christians anything but sects quarrelling over the meaning of a few obscure texts? Through two billion eyes that watch us, History itself stares us down, shredding our subjective certainties, uniting us in one common destiny, inviting us to show ourselves able to measure up to that human wave, inviting us to bring it something other that distinctions and anathema."[85]

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[82] See Vatican II Council, "The General Instruction on the Roman Missal," para. 54.
[83] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 494-495.
[84] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 495.
[85] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 83.

For Levinas, there is the need to go "beyond dialogue", that is, to have the "maturity and patience for insoluble problems" and to have "the idea of a possibility in which the impossible may be sleeping".[86] This is the "difficult condition" of alterity. To overlook the sense of ethical transcendence here is to be left with the impression that existence is reduced to some form of personal experience or "subjective certainties". It follows that St. Paul's words must be read as a discourse of ethical transcendence and sacrifice for another rather than an abstraction of distinctions.

In this prolegomenon, my aim is to emphasise that the encounter with Christ includes an encounter with the Other in Christ. We must not consider that Christ is a system of totality or a theory, but that he is always a person. Von Balthasar speaks of a person as a work of Christian art, Ford appeals to the experience of feasting, and Barnes focuses on the experience of dialogue.[87] But Levinas' ethical transcendence[88] calls each of these approaches into question: we must think from and for the person, not from the system of Being. Here, Levinas' thought and vocabulary can be a valuable resource in revitalising Christian theology He teaches us of the inter-personalisation of consciousness as beholden to the Other.[89] He does not reject the idea of consciousness, but conceives of it beyond the Husserlian formulation of intentionality and otherwise than the Heideggerian conception of truth as the unconcealedness of Being.[90]

There are three factors relating to Trinitarian *praxis*: ethical transcendence, eschatology and the eucharistic life. These three factors amount to a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*, which I will now introduce before expanding on each one.

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[86] See Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 87, 89. See also my article, "Jewish-Christian Relations and the Ethical Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas: 'At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible,'" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38:2-3 (Spring-Summer, 2001), 316-329.
[87] See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. I*, 65; Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267; and Barnes, *Theology and Dialogue of Religions*, 129.
[88] See Chapter Two, pp.61-64.
[89] Tony Kelly remarks that Levinas' idea of the human person "is not a pure, open-ended, undecided subjectivity enfolding everything into itself. It is a self constitutionally bound and beholden to the other in its disconcerting strangeness and claim". See Tony Kelly, "Death and hope," in Frances Moran and Tony Kelly, *Searching for the soul. Psychoanalytical and theological reflections on spiritual growth* (Strathfield: St Pauls Publications, 1999), 166.
[90] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 101 and Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 56.

• *Ethical transcendence.* Levinas has come to construct his unique vocabulary through developing and going beyond Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's fundamental ontology. In this regard, Levinasian idea of passivity and its modalities of fear, fission, diachrony, trauma, anarchy and persecution evoke the ideal of *praxis.* These concepts can be of fundamental importance in developing an understanding of Christian existence as Trinitarian *praxis.* Although both Ford and Barnes have ventured to use Levinas' ideas, they have set out to use them in regard to Being and personal experience. In a way that differs from these contemporary theologians and von Balthasar, we will employ a more explicit language of alterity.

• *Eschatology.* The language of alterity is linked not only to the Trinitarian life of the Church, but also to its eschatological orientation. Though neither Ford nor Barnes have exploited this connection, the language of alterity and eschatological discourse meet in the encounter with Christ and of the Other in Christ. At this juncture, Levinas' idea of passivity and its modalities will come into play as a means to develop a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis.*

• *Eucharist.* After making the links just mentioned, I will explore the connection between Trinitarian *praxis* and the eschatological and soteriological dimensions of the eucharist, and the manner in which they interconnect in a Trinitarian *praxis.*

Ethical Transcendence

To stress a key point, ethical subjectivity for Levinas is made possible when the self transcends its objectifying consciousness: ethics bursts open the discourse of reason to take it beyond objectifying presence. Any discourse on God must accord with ethical transcendence.[91] Levinas' sense of transcendence appeals to the God who awakens an unheard of obligation which has affected the self since time immemorial. This ethical transcendence is overwhelming for intentional consciousness. It cannot contain the alterity in which God comes to mind.

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[91] In other words, discourse is not only a signifier, that is for example, what is seen or heard, but is also a signified, namely the giving of responsibility. Levinas wants us to understand that transcendence as signification cannot be reduced to the immanence and representations of only a signifier. Furthermore for Levinas, transcendence must interrupt its own phenomenality through the diachrony of the signified. This is the necessary ambiguity of having a sense of transcendence once transcendence has withdrawn from consciousness.

Though Levinas speaks of moral consciousness,[92] like Heidegger he tends to avoid using the term and uses others instead. Before all common intentions, such as the experience of joy and will in self-consciousness, there is the language of passivity, of a bad conscience preceding all intentions. Levinas presents a vocabulary for such a language, namely fear, fission, trauma, diachrony, anarchy and persecution. These terms are the very modalities of passivity and the language in which ethical transcendence is articulated and the word "God" might be heard.[93] Furthermore, they are perhaps the inspiration for the logos not only to be articulated in philosophy, but also in theology.

Here we make only a brief remark on each of these terms as they have been discussed in Chapter Two.[94]

- With fear, responsibility for the Other's death and suffering becomes *my* fear.[95]
- Fission is the occurrence of God's inward voice calling forth the self's responsibility for the Other.
- Fission is also a trauma because of the overwhelming surprise in which God's inward voice has come to mind.
- The divine inward voice is related to *anarchy*. God's Word is beyond representation as it comes from a past without origin.
- Such an original divine address is marked by diachrony in that the past is never present to experience and Being. Accordingly, the past might be only signified by way of ethical transcendence.
- A certain persecution is entailed, as that the self might awaken to the diachrony of transcendence, as egoistic consciousness is inverted to become a moral conscience. The self is subject to a unique form of affliction when it begins to bear the faults of others.

The Levinasian terms of fear, fission, trauma, diachrony, anarchy and persecution exemplify the difficult condition of passivity towards the Other. But they also identify a context in which the logos, the very discourse of reason, might be

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[92] See Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 294.
[93] See Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 77-78; Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 225; and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 100-101.
[94] See Chapter Two, pp.48-50.
[95] Levinas, *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, 175-176.

articulated otherwise than through a theoretical consciousness. Taken together, they build upon each other in ever greater complexity to signify the non-phenomenal depths of solidarity with others. But these terms also identify ethical transcendence as the place and time for God's Word to be signified. We see in these terms a life that must be lived in paradox. For example, the terms speak of having a sense of transcendence once it has withdrawn from theoretical consciousness. Also, ethical subjectivity is an unheard-of obligation, that is, we are obliged to be responsible since time immemorial. Lastly, for example, there is the paradox of the Good beyond Being. In other words, having a "good" conscience is really having a "bad" conscience, one that fears for the Other. These paradoxes are of value for theology because they exemplify a language of alterity, a language that aids theology to face the problems of ambiguity and paradox in the relation between God, humanity and the world.

With the resources of Levinas' vocabulary, we turn now to von Balthasar's eschatological and Eucharistic positions, keeping in mind the development of a Trinitarian *praxis* I will refer 2 Corinthians 6: 8-10 ("... in honour and dishonour, in all repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see – we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.") to a cite of ethical transcendence.

Eschatology and Ethical Transcendence

Von Balthasar singles out 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:10 for its eschatological bearing. He states, "The passage speaks... finally of the paradoxes – impossible to resolve in a tidy passage – of a radically Christian existence in the face of the Church and of the world (vv.8-10)".[96] He then goes on to say, "This is precisely what is to be expected from the union of Cross and Resurrection in the kerygma, and it is precisely this union which fills the human vessel ...".[97] Von Balthasar cites this text to demonstrate the relationship between the ecclesial and the eschatological existence in a Christian existence aware of the "presence" of God in the Trinitarian-christological event.[98]

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[96] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 494.
[97] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 494.
[98] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 494.

God is known as present and experienced as "the human vessel" is filled with the one mystery of the Cross and Resurrection. At every stage, the correlation of objective and subjective experience is assumed. On the one hand, there is the objective experience of having heard of, studied and believed in the Cross and Resurrection. On the other, there is the subjective experience of savouring and seeing its glory. This correlation is framed by the analogy of Being since the creature exists as a likeness and image of the Creator. But here von Balthasar is faced with the deepest problem of his theo-logic. He must situate his understanding of God's revelation within a Trinitarian and eschatological horizon.[99]

Let us address the question of how a Levinasian perspective can be related to an ethical and eschatological existence. It goes without saying that Levinas, as a Jew, represents the tradition of Israel which is an essential constituent of the Christian faith and theology. In agreement with Robert Gibbs, I wish to underscore the influence of both Judaism and Franz Rosenzweig on Levinas' philosophical writings: "... the most 'Jewish' of his works are still philosophical".[100] Indeed, Gibbs remarks that Levinas' use of Jewish sources heightened his awareness of the Other in ways that caused not a philosophical reduction.[101] Looking at Levinas' philosophical discourse, there are explicit instances of an integration between the ethical and the messianic.[102] Furthermore, many of his terms, such as passivity, diachrony, the immemorial, testimony and glory, provide a fertile ground to relate the ethical to eschatological existence.

Despite Gibbs' recognition of the Jewish roots of Levinas' work, there is still room for confusion in interpreting his ethical metaphysics. For example, Gibbs uses the term "ethical experience" to describe what Levinas means when he speaks of what is prior to intentionality and consciousness. Gibbs does not use the more obvious Levinasian vocabulary of, say, "passivity", "exposure" or "encounter". Such terms, in this instance, can offer a greater clarity.[103]

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[99] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 9-10 and von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 495.
[100] See Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*, 155.
[101] See Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*, 155, 175.
[102] See for example Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 60.
[103] See Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*, 232.

We press on then to von Balthasar's reflection on eschatological existence. He states that eschatological existence cannot be located in a position between God and the world, but "within the sphere of the divine activity".[104] This point suggests the self-imposed limitations of von Balthasar's theology: by confining himself to the sphere of experience and Being, there is no space given to ethical transcendence. As a result, his thought reduces eschatological existence to personal experience and to an ontological unveiling of God's revelation in Creation. But now let us bring von Balthasar's approach into contact with Levinas' ideas of passivity and its various modalities in order to remedy this situation.

I wish to argue that an eschatological sense of ethical transcendence would signify the passivity of being exposed to Christ and to the Other in Christ. Let us look at this in more detail.

If the self is going to live out a Trinitarian *praxis*, then it must seek to transcend its common Christian *habitus* of experience such as feasting and savouring with the eyes of faith or even of judging with divisive viewpoints. Thus, the self should, as St. Paul indicates in 2 Cor 6:10 for example, have nothing, and yet possess everything. Let us keep this in mind in considering the Levinasian idea of passivity.

By having nothing, the self is in a condition of extreme passivity to the Other's poverty and freedom. Inasmuch as the self possesses everything, the self is responsible for everything, even for the Other's faults, sufferings and death. The paradox of Trinitarian *praxis* is that the more the self returns to its identity of alterity, the more the self divests itself of its personal experiences. We see then a movement from personal experience to a fear that comes to the self from the Other's face. This fear is not an intention or an act, but a passivity of being exposed to the Other. The passivity is so overwhelming that it causes a radicalisation of conscience, which gives birth to the discourse of reason. What, then, might this conscience without intentions signify? Beyond the emotions of being frightened and sad is the obligation to be responsible for the Other's death.[105]

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[104] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 495.

[105] For a discussion of this finding in relation to the eucharist, see my article, "Emmanuel Levinas and Christian Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 68:1 (Spring, 2003), 21-22.

For Levinas, the responsibility for the Other's death is in opposition to fundamental ontology in two ways. First, we have a reversal of Heidegger's idea of death as mine (*Jemeinigkeit*) into responsibility for the Other's death. Second, Heidegger's idea of state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*) or, as Levinas names it, the phenomenology of emotion, is rejected. This is because there is more meaning to be found in the relationship with the Other. In this light, we can look at eschatological existence in the site of alterity.

By facing-up to the fear for the Other beyond the finitude of my death and emotions, the self, might we suggest from a theological point of view, can also face-up to Christ's responsibility of dying for humanity. The passivity involved in this "facing" signifies that consciousness has been pushed beyond its limits. Consequently, the passivity of being faced by the Other in Christ is so overwhelming that the presence of emotions, specifically, fear for one's own death, is effaced. Divested of self and possessing nothing, the self, like Christ himself, is responsible for everyone. Fear for the Other now becomes the trauma of a fission. The eschatological sense of fission as the self lies in its venturing to be united to the crucified and risen Christ. In this fission, Christ's inward voice is heard as the voice of the self, bearing testimony to Christ's own eschatological existence. Let us consider this further in the light of 2 Corinthians 6:10, "... as having nothing, and yet possessing everything," when the full impact of alterity is recognised.

One the one hand, the Pauline "having nothing" signifies that the self must divest itself of self-centred emotions and judgments before the Other. The self is commanded to leave behind these experiences as they do not lead to transcendence, but to the immanence of knowledge and totality. On the other hand, God's reconciliation is everything insofar as the self lives for the Other beyond its powers, finitude and emotions. This is to say that the Other, and not the self's experiences, is in Christ and in the Spirit. In the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, God's reconciliation is encountered through Otherness. Hence, the sense of possessing everything is not that of experiencing senses and emotions, but that of being obsessed with responsibility for the Other. Such a radical turnabout would signify being absolutely surprised, overtaken, by what has always been determined since time immemorial. Therefore, just as the Spirit had inspired in Christ a life of expiation, the

Spirit, in the depths of the Other also inspires the self to share in Christ's expiation. The Pauline "having nothing yet possessing everything" paradoxically amounts to the same thing. Being free of self-interested experience ("having nothing") is an eschatological existence of otherness ("possessing everything").

We are not suggesting that the language of alterity should necessarily reject dogma. It subsumes doctrinal judgments within the life of ethical transcendence, for this has room for the ambiguity, immemoriality and the unthematisable reality of God's Reign. Von Balthasar has remarked that, "... there can be no Christian *praxis* not guided by a *theoria* as its light and norm".[106] There is a problem, none the less, when Christian *praxis* is guided by the light and norm of ontological language and experience – hence our present emphasis on a Trinitarian *praxis* looking beyond objectivity, Being and presence. As we have seen, for von Balthasar, Ford and Barnes, Christian *praxis* and Christian/Eucharistic *habitus* are associated with the language of totality. What we mean by Trinitarian *praxis* articulated in the light of alterity does not seek to devalue the meaning of "Christian", "eucharistic" or even "*habitus*".

We might further refine our analysis if we look more closely at von Balthasar's idea of eschatological existence. He states that eschatological existence stems from the Trinitarian event in which God reconciles humanity in Christ and in the Spirit. We find here that *praxis* has a Trinitarian foundation. But if we are going to understand *praxis* as ethical transcendence, then we must let the encounter of Christ and of the Other in Christ be our guide. With this in mind, let us look once more at the Levinasian idea of fission. The idea speaks of the coinciding of ethics and God's logos. In this sense, the command of God's logos is pronounced by the self in ethical subjectivity. Hence, we can say that Trinitarian *praxis* is guided by a *theoria* not available to experience. Such *theoria* is not the dogma of ontology and presence, but the Word of God pronounced in responsibility to Christ and to the Other in Christ. How, then, might we hear the Word of God?

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[106] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 22.

Levinas has pointed to the Other's face as the locus in which God's word is heard.[107] Furthermore, the Other's face provokes the signification and witness of God's word through the Other's Otherness or disturbing proximity.[108] Following this cue, we can suggest that the Other's face is the non-phenomenal locus in which to encounter Christ and his *praxis* of doing the Father's will in the Spirit. In other words, we should not conceive eschatological existence aesthetically as the experience of joy and feasting nor even ethically in terms of focusing on the experience of being "altered or made other". On the contrary, eschatological existence speaks of the self encountering Christ's expiation through fear, obsession and expiation for the Other. Like Christ and through Christ, the self has been ordered anarchically to expiate for another. As a result, the self's consciousness is overwhelmed by the anachronism of a kenotic responsibility that is already past. In a Levinasian sense, the passion to take on the Other's persecution and to bear the Other's fault is the sign in which the very "donation of the sign" is made. "Donation" or "giving" (*La Donation*) in the Levinasian lexicon signifies what is beyond experience and explanations; that is, the self is gifted since time immemorial with the passivity of sacrificing for another. Accordingly, I want to argue that Trinitarian *praxis* is a "gifted passivity" signified in the withdrawal of transcendence from presence.

Gifted Passivity

Up to now, I have questioned the role of experience and looked to ethics to speak of eschatology and Trinitarian *praxis*. Looking at eschatology and ethical transcendence together has enabled me to distinguish the idea of Trinitarian *praxis* from the ontologically loaded term of Christian *habitus*. Further, I have conceived of Trinitarian *praxis* as first passivity, a state in which the self transcends its consciousness to expiate for others. I employ expiation to point out the obsessive aspect of ethical transcendence which the self must reach to pronounce the Word of God in responsibility to Christ and to the Other in Christ. Now I wish to fine tune the analysis of the self's passivity by speaking of "gifted passivity". This will help to stress the enigmatic ways in which God's word is encountered through Trinitarian *praxis*.

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[107] See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 110.
[108] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 89, 139.

Let us look at the term "gifted passivity". I write of "gift" in the past tense to stress the diachrony of God's Word in the Other's face. Diachrony refers to a past that has never been represented in consciousness. With this Levinasian idea of time, we can begin to understand "gifted" as that which cannot be explained and identified in intentional consciousness. If we take one further step, the idea of being gifted *with passivity* identifies the diachrony of a past that cannot be represented in consciousness, a diachrony of God speaking in the self. The implication is that God's word is already gifted since time immemorial and can only be signified in passivity. And looking at the other modalities of passivity, we can suggest that the self is not only gifted with the time of diachrony, but also with fear, fission, trauma, anarchy and persecution.

In the context of eschatology and Trinitarian *praxis*, gifted passivity can be explained as follows: when the self encounters the Father's will in the Other's face, pronounces it in expiation for the Other, the self signifies that it has been gifted with a share in Christ's passivity in the Spirit. At this point, the language of alterity includes "the difficult condition" of responsibility to the point of a Christ-like passion of expiating for others. This brings me to another point to which I want to draw attention regarding the idea of gifted passivity.

Granted that the word of God is encountered in passivity and is gifted since time immemorial, there is no guarantee that the self can articulate it beyond Being and experience. This is because to utter God's word through persecution and expiation is indeed a difficult condition. Nevertheless, the language of alterity informs Trinitarian *praxis* and provides an alternative language compared to the vocabulary of ontological unveiling and the transcendental qualities of Being "as such".[109] For Trinitarian *praxis* is guided by a *theoria* not available to experience. A "gifted passivity" alone can command us to a Trinitarian *praxis*. If we reach such ethical transcendence, then we might be able to speak of the enigmatic ways in which the word of God is heard and signified in responsibility. The combined terms of "gifted" and "passivity", although complex, is meant to bring theology into the place and time of Trinitarian *praxis*. The implication is that God's word is not necessarily a dogma

[109] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 15, 269.

to be experienced. It is first passivity, and a gifted one at that. Hence, under the aegis of alterity, we can be led to appreciate that God's word is an enigma and a gift irreducible to presence.

It is a complex task to theologise at the limits of phenomenology. We also find this for example when Horner writes: "Not every gift (is) God, but it seems that God is only to be thought starting from the gift...".[110] It would seem that the brackets serve to emphasise the difficulty of using the ideas of God and gift together, and furthermore the question of whether we have to think God in terms of Being ("to be", hence "is"). In even more complex language that also signifies the idea of gift beyond presence, Levinas writes: "The infinitely exterior becomes an 'inward' voice, but a voice bearing witness to the fission of the inward secret that makes signs to another, signs of this very giving of signs".[111] We can begin to appreciate again, by using Levinas' idea of passivity, that the word "God" is not an articulation of presence, but one of a radical eschatological existence or, as I have come to construct, a "gifted passivity". However, our account of Trinitarian *praxis* as "gifted passivity" should not be isolated to eschatology. We must still consider how the context of the eucharist will allow us to bring out the soteriological dimensions of Trinitarian *praxis* and its connections with eschatology.

The Eucharist and Gifted Passivity

Employing the language of alterity in eschatology, I have set out to develop a prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*. Through applying Levinas' ideas of passivity and so forth, I have constructed the term "gifted passivity" and suggested its place in Trinitarian *praxis*. In the state of passivity, the self is ordered to expiate for the Other. The order is however a trauma overwhelming consciousness. This is because the self's passivity has been gifted since time immemorial. This sense of anarchical being-affected arises out of being gifted through Christ and in the Spirit. But it is also in the space and time of sharing in Christ's eucharistic life before the Other that the self takes on its Trinitarian *praxis* of gifted passivity. How, then, is "gifted passivity" related to the eucharistic dimension of Trinitarian *praxis*? To answer this question

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[110] See Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 247.
[111] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 147.

will mean linking soteriology with the language of alterity. To begin, let us consider von Balthasar's idea of Christ's Passion initiating an ontological shift.

At the beginning of the reflection on the dramatic dimensions of the eucharist, von Balthasar gives an ontological perspective on incorporation into Christ's Passion: "After all we have said about the Passion of Christ being "for us", there can be no doubt that those for whose sins Christ suffered and atoned have undergone an ontological shift. Moreover, this shift must be acknowledged to have taken place – contrary to Luther – *prior* to their embracing of the fact by an act of faith".[112] The incorporation effects an ontological shift prior to any act of believing and knowing. In other words, Christ's Passion initiates communion prior to the act of faith. But the notion of an ontological shift implied in being incorporated into Christ's Passion would suggest an incorporation into the totality of Christ's Being. It might appear that incorporation is more an experience of divine Being. Are we then to believe that Christ's Passion initiates the presence of totality and the dramatisation of consciousness? We need to conceive of Christ's Passion not as initiating an ontological shift, but as passivity beyond Being and beyond experience, that is, as "gifted passivity". In this way, we can discover that the eucharist is not an ontological incorporation into Christ's Passion, but the very encounter in which we are responsible to the Other with and through Christ's Passion.

Von Balthasar's ontological framework seeks to prove and explain that humanity, and the Church in particular, are incorporated into Christ's suffering and death "for us". The idea of incorporation identifies participating in Christ's obedience and freedom on the one hand, and grace on the other. In this regard, participating in Christ's all-embracing mission perfects human nature and all its decisions and actions. But for von Balthasar, this is a freedom that, "...comes about through our being incorporated in the Eucharist that, in the Spirit, Christ makes to the Father".[113] In simpler terms, the eucharist deepens the grace for the believer to participate in Christ's triune mission. Given this Trinitarian dimension of the eucharist as that which inspires *praxis*, I want now to think in terms otherwise than von Balthasar's ontological projection of it. It might appear that the term "incorporation" emphasises Christ's totality of Being more than Christ's transcendence and person. In contrast, let us now

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[112] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 389.
[113] von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 406.

consider the way the term "gifted passivity" would help to clarify and deepen how the eucharist inspires a Trinitarian *praxis*.

First, let us see how the idea of "gifted passivity" might bring out the soteriological dimension of the eucharist. Here, we are asking how grace perfects a Trinitarian *praxis*, of having nothing, but possessing everything (2 Cor 6:10). Hence, contrary to the idea of being incorporated into the eucharist, I want to suggest that the believer is gifted with passivity in the eucharist. First, let us look at the idea of being gifted in the space and time of Christ's Passion. I suggest that to be gifted is not to have one's nature perfected, but to be anarchically affected by the trauma of God's order to Christ and the world to be responsible. Let us now extend such a conception to the context of the eucharist.

In the language of alterity, we could say that the eucharist signifies that an order of responsibility has been made through the time of Christ's death, going to the dead and Resurrection. This is a time beyond the experience of having one's nature perfected. We can say then that eucharistic grace perfects the possibility of expiating like Christ for the Other. But such grace demands a difficult condition. For, it is the eucharist that surprises the self absolutely with the trauma of Christ's expiation. Such trauma inspires devotion to the Other's hunger for the body and blood of Christ, a hunger namely for salvation, justice and mercy. Hence in the eucharist, it is not my hunger for Christ that matters, but the Other's hunger to such a point where *my* hunger is the Other's hunger. We can thus begin to imagine how the eucharist is a site of ethical transcendence in which the self is gifted with the Trinity's eternal salvific plan.

According to von Balthasar, Christ's Passion gives rise to an ontological shift that must be acknowledged before the act of faith and points to St. Paul for proof (Rom 5:8, 10, 14:8 and 2 Cor 5:14-15).[114] The idea of an ontological shift thematises the experience of Christ's goodness as an essence in consciousness. In contrast to this, we would argue that Christ's Passion evokes a sense of "gifted passivity" so that St. Paul's writings are not proof of any ontological shift, but rather articulate theology and alterity together. Before describing the paradoxes of eschatological existence, St. Paul writes: "For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one

[114] See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Vol. IV*, 389-390.

has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). It is significant St. Paul emphasises that the love of Christ urges the faithful not to live for themselves, but for Christ. If we take this soteriological dimension of eucharistic living to be first ethical rather than ontological, we can see that it deepens and clarifies not the perfection of *my* nature, but the perfection of *my* expiation for others. The self is therefore first a passivity to the Other's hunger. Further, we can conceive that the eucharist ruptures the experience of one's nature as perfect. Or, in other words, just as Christ cannot deny humanity with responsibility, so the eucharist deepens and clarifies the self's responsibility beyond essence. Hence, the eucharistic self exists through and for the Other to a point where such passivity coincides with expiation.

Expiation is a difficult condition, but I want to argue that it is a condition *par excellence* that gives rise to theology. This is to say that the salvific encounter of Christ's suffering, death and rising to new life cannot be reduced to an essence in consciousness, but rather it can be discovered in eschatological existence. Accordingly, if we are going to grasp the soteriological dimensions of the eucharist, the grasping must also be a passivity coinciding with expiation. The first concern of liturgy is not an aesthetic feasting of the senses or a dramatisation of Christ's Passion in consciousness, but a passion of taking on humiliation, persecution and trauma for another. If we take this to be true, then any soteriological conception of the eucharist must also be one that meets the demands of eschatological existence. For example, when St. Paul states that, "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Corinthians 6:10), we could well imagine that not living for oneself may end up in a life of poverty. But for St. Paul this is everything; for when we live for Christ, we are rich. It is my conviction that the theologian is called to this very vocation. Hence, when theology rises above experience and essence, it might just cut through objectivity and articulate the word "God" in the space and time of ethical subjectivity.

Conclusion

To this point, I have set out to argue that the eucharist is not an ontological incorporation, but a trauma cutting across the unity of transcendental apperception

and transcending the totality of Being. It gives rise to what I have called a "gifted passivity" or, in theological terms, a Trinitarian *praxis*. Rather than conceive of *praxis* through the ontologically loaded notions of "Christian *praxis*", "eucharistic *habitus*" and "Christian *habitus*" after the example of von Balthasar, Ford and Barnes, we have suggested something "otherwise". This is because these terms are based on the language of totality and give rise to either an aestheticisation and/or an ethicisation of consciousness. In other words, the ideas of "Christian *praxis*", "eucharistic *habitus*" and of "Christian *habitus*" are articulated in a system of totality and experience. It seems that Ford and Barnes, like Purcell, engage Levinas' writings critically in order to redeem ontology through a grounding in ethics and/or aesthetics. Differing from Purcell, Ford and Barnes in this respect, it is my argument that Trinitarian *praxis* starts from and for the Other in Christ, that is, by way of ethics without ontology. For the inspiration of this idea, I have drawn particularly from Levinas' ideas of passivity, the immemoriality of consciousness and of otherness.

For Levinas, consciousness is not only experience, but is also a moral conscience beholden to the Other. This conception of consciousness signifies that the Other is not subject to experience, theory and cognition. Hence, the Other should not be identified as a work of art or even reduced to an object of feasting or of dialogue. The Other is beyond the event of Being. Once we understand that we cannot reduce the Other to the mastery of our own projects in life, then we can begin to articulate otherwise than experience and essence. However, Levinas, for the most part, holds that only philosophy, in the sense of being "the wisdom of love at the service of love", is called to take this role.[115] In contrast, I have set out to argue that theology is called upon to do the same, especially when conceived in the site of Trinitarian *praxis*.

I have stressed Trinitarian *praxis* in regards to ethical transcendence, eschatology and soteriology. By doing so, I have begun to revitalise Christian theology not necessarily with another theory of totality, but with the idea of theology coinciding with the space and time of Christ's Passion and of the Other in Christ. Accordingly, I began looking at Trinitarian *praxis* through connecting eschatological existence with ethical transcendence. I found that the non-phenomenality of the Other's face gave rise to

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[115] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162.

encountering Christ and his *praxis* of doing the Father's will in the Spirit. Furthermore, I argued that the encounter was an extreme passivity in which consciousness is overwhelmed by ethics. We were therefore in a position to understand that eschatological existence is first a discourse of ethics, a discourse without origin and a discourse coming from an immemorial past of the Trinity's eternal salvific plan. I described such eschatological discourse with the term "gifted passivity". If we break this term up, "passivity" refers to the overwhelming trauma of responsibility and "gifted" to being immemorially united with the Father's obedience through Christ and in the Spirit.

Following the conception of "gifted passivity" in the context of describing the eschatological dimension of Trinitarian *praxis*, I looked at it in regards to the eucharist. My purpose was to bring out both the eschatological and soteriological dimensions of the eucharist and how their interrelation might give light to a Trinitarian *praxis*. On the one hand I argued that the dimension of Christ's Passion in the eucharist deepens and clarifies the self's eschatological existence. On the other hand, I argued that any soteriological conception of the eucharist must also be one that meets the demands of eschatological existence. In other words, passivity to the Other in Christ is the ground, which guides a salvific understanding of the eucharist. If we look at these two arguments as a whole, we have an understanding of Trinitarian *praxis*, namely that the eucharist is the place and time of eschatological existence (2 Corinthians 6:10) and of being urged on the by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14).

As von Balthasar suggests, the love of Christ that urges us on is indeed prior to the act of faith. But, I have found that it is also prior to any ontological shift, that is, reducing Christ's Passion to an essence, an *a priori* presence or even an experience of goodness. It follows that the love of Christ in the eucharist urges us on before the Other in Christ and since the time of the Trinity's salvific plan (Rom 8:3). This is to say that the Passion of Christ urges us to hear the logos of God on the Other's face and to articulate it with the reason and passion of expiation. If we take this to be true, we can discover that Trinitarian *praxis* is an optics for theology, to conceive of Christ and of the Other in Christ beyond analogy and experience. Accordingly, with the term "gifted passivity", I have tried to bring out how ethical transcendence might provide the possibility for *theoria* and *praxis* to coincide.

In the course of the thesis, I have attempted to enrich von Balthasar's trilogy of aesthetics, dramatics and logic with ideas inspired from Levinas' thought. Furthermore from these attempts, I have set out in this chapter to articulate a "prolegomenon to a Trinitarian *praxis*". Although throughout the thesis there is much evidence for noting the complexity of Levinas' thought for Christian theology, it has nevertheless served to teach of the priority of responsibility for the Other. In particular, I have found the Levinasian ideas of otherness and of passivity most helpful for inspiring theological insight. Consequently, I have argued that God is neither an essence nor an experience. Rather, it is a difficult condition in which to encounter God's word, one that demands a liturgy of responsibility to the point of expiating for others. Accordingly, we should not, as von Balthasar's trilogy exemplifies, focus on Christ as an object of analogical thought, but rather understand Christ as a person of ethical subjectivity. Theology and Trinitarian *praxis* belong together. Perhaps then, when theology is both a discourse and a signification of the divine logos, we might praise God's wonderful works in the place and time of offering sacrifice.

Earlier in the chapter, I spoke of an isolated instance whereby Levinas referred to holiness as an original event which would also be first theology. In contrast, I have spoken of Trinitarian *praxis* as an ethical event with eschatological and soteriological horizons. My conception of Trinitarian *praxis* owes much to Levinas' sense of holiness and his ideas of otherness and passivity. Yet, it has gone beyond his original context. Throughout the thesis, my aim has been to use Levinas' ideas as inspiration to enrich von Balthasar's theology and to develop my own. Levinas' thought has much to offer. Given its complexity, it will perhaps always be an arduous task to utilise it for the benefit of Christian theology. But I argue that persevering with such complexity can result in an important contribution. This has been the major aim of the thesis. Beyond the language of ontology, analogy and presence, I have tried to argue that it is possible to theologise. For Purcell, Ford, Barnes and, also, Ward, this is perhaps impossible.

Despite their difference of view, I have argued that Levinas' thought is the very inspiration to conceive of a language of alterity for Christian theology in which we

might come to a sense of Trinitarian *praxis*. With such a sense, the way is open to enter into a "maturity and patience" for insoluble problems. This is the eschatological path to go "beyond dialogue" and to seek a union between scholarship and *praxis*.[116] Jewish-Christian relations could well be a context and a starting point for the Christian scholar to live out a Trinitarian *praxis*. Indeed, if the world's redemption, stirring as mercy and kenotic love, is witnessed first in the reconciliation between Jews and Christians, this, then, could be the testimony that everything is possible.[117]

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[116] This finding is explored in the context of Jewish-Christian relations and the "Eschatological Vocation of a Scholar" in my article, "Jewish-Christian Relations and the Ethical Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas: 'At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible'," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38:2-3 (Spring-Summer, 2001), 318-319.

[117] See my article, "Jewish-Christian Relations and the Ethical Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas: 'At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible'," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38:2-3 (Spring-Summer, 2001), 328.

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