Emmanuel Levinas:

Ethics, Justice and the Human beyond Being
Emmanuel Levinas:
Ethics, Justice and the Human beyond Being

Elisabeth Louise Thomas

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of General Philosophy, The University of Sydney
January, 1999
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations \hspace{1cm} v
Acknowledgments \hspace{1cm} vi

Introduction \hspace{1cm} 1

Chapter 1: \textit{Dasein} and Human Being \hspace{1cm} 16
i) The Renewal of the Question \hspace{1cm} 17
ii) Thrownness, Evasion and Enchainment \hspace{1cm} 24
iii) Originary Insufficiency \hspace{1cm} 29
iv) Pleasure: From Triumph to Shame \hspace{1cm} 35
v) Nausea and Anxiety \hspace{1cm} 38

Chapter 2: Being, \textit{Il y a} and Hypostasis \hspace{1cm} 44
i) Ontological Separation versus Ontological Difference \hspace{1cm} 46
ii) The Impersonal and its Other \hspace{1cm} 53
iii) \textit{Il y a} and the Impossible Instance \hspace{1cm} 57
iv) \textit{Il y a} and the Duality of Hypostasis \hspace{1cm} 61
v) Beyond Hope: Death, Time, \textit{Autrui} \hspace{1cm} 65

Chapter 3: Enjoyment: Subject and World \hspace{1cm} 72
i) Hunger and Thirst: The Salvation and Sincerity of Life \hspace{1cm} 73
ii) Enjoyment and Intentionality in \textit{Totality and Infinity} \hspace{1cm} 76
iii) Enjoyment, World, Exteriority \hspace{1cm} 80
iv) The Subject of Enjoyment and \textit{Il y a} \hspace{1cm} 87
v) Enjoyment: Light and Distance \hspace{1cm} 91

Chapter 4: The Ambiguous Economy of Dwelling \hspace{1cm} 95
i) Dwelling: The Gift of Time \hspace{1cm} 96
ii) Recollection and Welcome: Sexual Difference \hspace{1cm} 103
iii) Possession and/or Representation \hspace{1cm} 110
iv) Realms of Light: New Visions \hspace{1cm} 114
v) Representation, Sensibility and the Face  

Chapter 5: Ethos: Beyond Eros and Agape
i) Feminine Alterity: From Eros to Ethos  
ii) Eros and Plato's Social Totality  
iii) From Eros to the Face  

Chapter 6: Ethics is Justice
i) The Other and Social Justice  
ii) Freedom and the Face  
iii) The Third and Justice  
iv) Ethics and Ontology, or Two Kinds of Justice  

Chapter 7: Ethics, Ontology and Justice
i) Truth and Being's Justice  
ii) Ethics and Being's Justice  
iii) Language and Affectivity  
iv) The Said and the Saying of the Said  

Chapter 8: Subjectivity and Tertiality: Il y a and Illeity
i) Ethical Amphibology  
ii) Human and Existential Matters  
iii) Tertiality: Illeity and the Third Party  
iv) Why Alterity is Ethical  

Conclusion  
Bibliography
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABBREVIATIONS of WORKS by LEVINAS</th>
<th>(refer to bibliography for details)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BW</td>
<td>Basic Philosophical Writings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Collected Philosophical Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEHH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMT</td>
<td>Dieu, la Mort et le Temps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>Existence and Existents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAH</td>
<td>Humanisme de l'autre homme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Le Temps et l'autre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TaI</td>
<td>Totality and Infinity An Essay in Exteriority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TeI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>In the Time of the Nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Time and the Other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my colleagues and the staff at The University of Sydney, especially my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Moira Gatens whose support was essential for the completion of this thesis. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Dr. Linnell Secomb for her continual encouragement and support. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Bernhard Waldenfels, Thomas Bedorf and Dr. Gabrielle Baptist for making me welcome in Bochum and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) for their financial support. Finally, thanks especially to Peter and to Richard, Trish, Ingrid and Cate.
Abstract: Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics, Justice and the Human beyond Being

PhD. Candidate: Elisabeth Thomas

Levinas finds the early twentieth century to be marked by a rejection of the concept of humanity, at the moment of its awakening to its own brutality. While accepting the anti-humanist position, insofar as it questions the primacy of free will, and an unquestionable security in its attachment to a pregiven, universal Reason, Levinas' work questions the value of rethinking the human in terms of being. This thesis traces Levinas' attempt to rehabilitate humanity from its devotion to ontology as first philosophy. It argues that Levinas offers a reinterpretation of the relation of being and the human, tracing the movement in Levinas' work from a critical attempt to rethink the human and being, to the notion of the human beyond being.

The thesis begins with a critical engagement with Heideggerian ontology suggesting that Levinas' renewal of the question of being in his prewar essays reflects a concern for the meaning of subjective existence and its relation to the social and political totality. These concerns lie behind his reinterpretation of the relation of existence and the existent in his essays of the 1940's in which Levinas undertakes a critique of a Platonic social totality and introduces a notion of the alterity of eros which does not have its value determined in terms of a teleology of social production.

From this basis, Levinas is shown to address the question of justice by articulating the essentially ambiguous relation between the subject and another in terms of the ambivalence of the face, and contrasting this with the alterity of love. The development of these ideas is traced across Levinas' major works. In Totality and Infinity, Levinas argues that the response to the singular other is conceived of as the event of the production of a universal which affirms the tertiality of the social totality, that is, attests to the whole of humanity. In Otherwise than Being, the relation of ethics and justice is discussed in different terms, those of the relation of the ethical Saying and the realm of the Said or being's justice. Levinas juxtaposes the ontological tertiality of the third, with the notion of an ethical tertiality, which he calls illeity. Illeity is found to not be reducible to the ontological tertiality of the
third party, but to name the exceeding of subjectivity in terms of an absolute susceptibility to the Other, and is an excessive concept of a singular universal: the human beyond being.