

§ Dialogue

Self-Consciousness and Proximity of the Neighbor

The value that an entire series of philosophers, theologians and moralists, politicians, and even public opinion, attach to the notion, or to the practice—and, in any case, to the word—of dialogue, to the discourse that men facing each other hold between them, summoning one another and exchanging statements and objections, questions and answers, attests to a new orientation toward the idea that Western society has had of the essence of the meaningful and the spiritual. This is perhaps a result of the trials of the twentieth century since the First World War. It is thus not out of the question, in our time, to speak of a philosophy of dialogue and oppose it to the philosophical tradition of the unity of the I or the system, and self-sufficiency, and immanence. The work of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig in Germany, that of Gabriel Marcel in France, and their influence in the world—but also the many remarkable works signed by less illustrious names—justify this manner of speaking.

Spirit as Knowledge, and Immanence

It is in the psyche, conceived as knowledge—to the point of self-consciousness—that the received philosophy situates the origin or the natural place of what is meaningful, and recognizes spirit. Does not all that occurs in the human psyche, and all that takes place there, end up by being known? That which is secret and unconscious, repressed or altered, is still measured or healed through the very consciousness that these things have lost, or which has lost them. All that is lived is expressed legitimately as *experience*. It is converted into “received lessons” that converge into a

unity of knowledge, whatever their dimensions and modalities: contemplation, will, affectivity; or sensibility and understanding; or external perception, self-consciousness and reflection on self; or objectivizing thematization and familiarity with that which is not proposed; or primary and secondary qualities, kinesthetic and cenesthetic sensations. The relations with the neighbor, the social group, and God would again be collective and religious *experiences*. Even reduced to the indetermination of *living* and to the familiarity of pure *existing*, of pure being, the psyche *lives* this or that, *is* this or that, on the mode of *seeing* or of *feeling*, as if *to live* and *to be* were transitive verbs and *this* and *that* their direct objects. It is this implicit knowledge, doubtless, which justifies the wide use that Descartes makes of the term *cogito* in the *Meditations*. And this first person verb expresses well the *unity* of the I, where all knowledge is adequate to itself.

As knowledge, thought relates to what is thinkable, that is, the thinkable called being. Relating to being, thought is outside itself, but remains marvelously in itself, or returns to itself. The exteriority or alterity of oneself is taken up again into immanence. That which thought knows, or what it learns in its "experience," is at once the *other* and the *property* [*propre*] of thought. One learns only that which one already knows, and that which attaches to the interiority of thought in the manner of a memory that can be evoked or re-presented. Reminiscence and imaginings assure something like the synchrony and the unity of that which, in experience subject to time, is lost or is only to come.

As learning, thought entails a grasping [*saisie*], a *hold* on what is learned, and a possession. The "grasping" of learning is not purely metaphorical. Even before technical interestedness, this learning is already an outline of an incarnate practice, already "hands on" [*mainmise*]. Presence becomes main-tenance.¹ Can even the most abstract lesson dispense with any manual hold on the things of the "life world," the famous *Lebenswelt*? The being that appears to the I of cognition not only instructs it, but *gives* itself *ipso facto* to it. Already perception grasps; and the *Begriff* [concept] preserves this meaning of ascendancy. The "*giving* itself"—whatever the efforts that the distance "from the cup to the lip" requires—is on the scale of thought thinking; through its "transcendence," it promises to thought a possession and an enjoyment, a satisfaction, as though thinking thought to its measure through the fact of being able—as incarnate thought—to rejoin what it thought. The thinking and the psyche of immanence: self-sufficiency. This is precisely the phenomenon

of the world: viz., the fact that an accord is assured in the grasping, between what is thinkable and the thinking; the fact that its appearing is also a *giving itself*, and that knowledge of the world is a satisfaction; as though this knowledge filled a need. Perhaps it is this that Husserl is expressing when he affirms a correlation—which is *the* correlation—between thought and the world. Husserl describes theoretical knowledge in its most perfected forms—objectivizing and thematizing knowledge—as filling the measure of the intention, or as empty intentionality filling itself.

The works of Hegel, into which all the currents of the Western spirit have come to flow, and in which all its levels are manifested, is at once a philosophy of absolute knowledge and of the satisfied man. The psyche of theoretical knowledge constitutes a thought that thinks to its measure and, in its adequation to what is thinkable, equals itself and shall be conscious of itself. It is the Same that finds itself anew in the Other.

The activity of thought *has reason* over every alterity and it is therein, ultimately, that its very rationality resides. Conceptual synthesis and synopsis are stronger than the dispersion and the incompatibility of what is given as other, as *before*, and as *after*. Dispersion and incompatibility refer back to the unity of the subject and of the transcendental apperception of the *I think*. Hegel writes, in the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, "It is to the deepest and most accurate views of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the view belongs, which consists in recognizing the unity that constitutes the *essence of the concept* as an originally synthetic unity of apperception, as a unity of the *I think*, or the consciousness of self."² The unity of the *I think* is the ultimate form of spirit as knowledge, though it might be confounded with the being that it knows, and identified with the system of knowledge.

The unity of the *I think* is the ultimate form of spirit as knowledge. And to this unity of the *I think* all things are referred, constituting a system. The system of what is intelligible is, ultimately, a consciousness of self.

The Dialogue of Immanence

The *I think* in which being-in-act is constituted can be interpreted as coinciding with what it constitutes: the full self-consciousness of the *I think* would be the very *system* of knowledge in its unity of intelligibility.

The thinking thought that tends toward this order of reason will express itself consequently, despite the labor of its research and the genius of its invention, as a detour which the system of being takes to put itself in order. This is a detour that its terms and structures follow to arrange and secure themselves [*s'arrimer*]. Such is *spirit*, not only according to Hegel, where the process of knowing is "the movement of being itself" (*Logik*); nor merely according to our contemporary structuralist objectivism. In Husserlian phenomenology—despite the creative spontaneity conferred upon the transcendental Ego—the modes of knowledge are commanded, as the teleology of consciousness, essentially by the being [*l'être*] to which consciousness accedes. The spirit is the order of things—or the things in order—of which thinking thought would only be the recollection and the ordering. The possibility or hope that the *I think* would have, no longer to posit itself for itself over against the thinkable, to efface itself before the intelligible, would be its own intelligence, its rationality, and ultimate internalization.

An accord and a unity of knowledge in the truth. The thought ever thinking seeks these by diverse paths. It certainly resorts to words. But these are signs that thought gives to itself without speaking to anyone. In its work of assembly, thought may have to search for a presence of the thinkable beyond that which presents itself immediately, "in flesh and blood" (*leiblich da*)³ or in images, or for the presence of a signified through a sign. It may have to search for what is not yet present to thought, but which is already no longer closed up in itself. That there be no thought without language does not signify, consequently, the necessity of an internal discourse. Thought divides itself in order to question itself and to respond, but the thread is again tied up. Thought *reflects* upon itself by interrupting its spontaneous progression, but it still proceeds from the same *I think*. It remains the same. It passes from one term to a contrary one that calls to it, but the dialectic in which it finds itself is not a dialogue or, at least, it is the dialogue of the soul with itself, proceeding by questions and answers. Plato defines thought in precisely this way. According to the traditional interpretation of the internal discourse, which goes back to this definition, the spirit thinking remains no less one and unique, despite its movements and its going and coming, whereby it can oppose itself to itself.

It is through the empirical multiplicity of thinking men that the language that is effectively spoken would circulate. Yet even there, this lan-

guage is comprehended in its subordination to knowing. For each of the interlocutors, this language consists in entering into the thought of the other, in coinciding in *reason*, and in internalizing itself there. In opposition to the "interiority" of sly passions and the secret perfidy of subjective opinions, Reason would be the true inner life. Reason is one. It has no one left with whom to communicate; nothing is outside of it. And consequently, Reason is like the silence of inner discourse. The questions and the answers of such an "exchange of ideas" reproduce or stage anew those of a dialogue that the soul holds with itself. Thinking subjects would amount to multiple obscure points around which a clarity is created when they speak to and rediscover one another, in the same way that, in inner discourse, the thread of thought that had to question itself is retied. In this clarity, the obscure points of the various I's pale, fade, but are also sublimated. This exchange of ideas will hold ultimately within a single soul, in a single consciousness, in the *cogito* that Reason remains. One can call this conversation dialogue, wherein the interlocutors enter, the ones into the thought of the others; wherein the dialogue brings someone to reason [*faire entendre raison*]. One can call "sociality" the unity of the multiple consciousnesses that have entered into the same thought in which their reciprocal alterity is suppressed. This is the famous dialogue that is called to stop violence by bringing the interlocutors to reason, establishing peace in unanimity, and suppressing proximity in coincidence. The path of predilection of Western humanism. A nobility of idealist renunciation! To be sure. But it would only be possible in a Spinozistic universe of pure love of truth and intelligibility. An effacement before truth, but also a power of domination and a possibility of cunning: a knowledge of the other as of an object prior to any social existence [*socialité*] with that other. Yet consequently also a power acquired over him as over a thing and, through language, a power that ought to lead to the unique reason all the temptations of a deceitful rhetoric, of publicity and of propaganda. Yet we must above all wonder whether the elevation of this peace by the Reason relished by noble souls owes nothing to the prior non-indifference to the other man; whether it owes nothing to the social life with him which would be a relation to the neighbor, a relation other than the representation one can form of his being, other than the pure knowledge of his existence, his nature and his spirituality. We must ask ourselves whether the dynamism and exaltation of peace by truth derives uniquely from the suppression of alterity and not just as

much from the very possibility of the Encounter with the other as other (perhaps thanks to a dialogue preceding reason), for which a common truth is the pretext.

Be that as it may, the great problem placed in the path of those who expect the end of violence starting from a dialogue that would only need to perfect knowledge is the difficulty, by Plato's own admission, of bringing to this dialogue opposed beings inclined to do violence to each other. It would be necessary to find a dialogue to make these beings enter into dialogue. That is, unless we suppose the prior unity of a sovereign and divine knowledge, or of a substance that thinks itself and that would have burst into a multiplicity of consciousnesses, sufficiently masters of themselves, limited in their horizons, opposed by their differences, and hostile to each other—yet which find themselves, from conflict to conflict, compelled or led to the dialogues that ought to permit, by degrees, the convergence of gazes starting from multiple points of view, all of which being necessary nonetheless to the plenitude of a thought rediscovering its lost sovereignty and *unity*, its *I think*, or its *system*.

The very birth of language could, consequently, be sought starting from knowledge. This birth would be logically and perhaps chronologically posterior to it. In the empirical multiplicity of beings existing as intentional and incarnate consciousnesses, each one would have knowledge and consciousness of "something" and of its own consciousness. However, it would arrive, by appresentative experiences and by *Einfühlung* [empathy], at an awareness of other consciousnesses; that is, at a knowledge that each consciousness other than itself had, of the same "something," of it itself, and of all the other consciousnesses. In this way communication would be established: the signs of language would be born from all the expressive manifestations of bodies signifying in appresentation. The Husserlian theory of the constitution of intersubjectivity can be considered a rigorous formulation of the subordination of language to knowledge, reducing to the lived *qua experience* every modality independent of meaning to which dialogue could lay claim. In a characteristic and remarkable text of his *Krisis*, Husserl goes to the point of claiming "to take lodging in the internal discourse, the discourse which goes toward all the others." "That which I am there stating scientifically," he writes, "is said from me to me, but at the same time, in a paradoxical fashion, I say it to all the others inasmuch as they are implicated transcendently in me and the ones in the others."⁴

The Hegelian way of deducing the multiplicity of consciousnesses, recognizing each other mutually and thus communicating among themselves, from a march toward absolute knowledge in the celebrated pages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, again proceeds from this priority of knowledge over dialogue. But it is—in an ontological context quite different from that of Husserlian phenomenology—a speculative effort to found, in thought, the opposition of this multiplicity, while even the necessity to resort to this grounded moment signifies the impossibility of language's staying within the dimensions of the *cogito*.

Dialogue and Transcendence

Contemporary philosophy of dialogue insists upon a wholly other dimension of meaning that opens in language: upon the interhuman relation or the original sociality produced in dialogue. This would have a signification by itself and would constitute a spiritual authenticity of its own. The multiplicity of thinking beings, the plurality of consciousnesses, is not a simple fact—some sort of contingency, or a purely empirical "misfortune"—like the effect of some fall or ontological catastrophe of the One. The social existence that language establishes between souls is not compensation for a unity of thought that would have been lost or missed. Quite the contrary, beyond the sufficiency of the being-for-itself another possibility of excellence is shown in the human dimension that is not measured by the perfection of the consciousness-of-self. In effect, early in his work, Gabriel Marcel denounced in his *Journal Métaphysique* what he called "the eminent value of *autarchy*," or the sufficiency unto oneself, in order to affirm that "only a relation of a being to a being can be called spiritual."⁵

In the new reflection, the sociality of language is no longer reducible to the transmission of types of knowledge among the multiple I's and to their confrontation, in which this knowledge is raised to the universal intelligibility into which these thinking I's would be absorbed, or sublimated, or united in order to "finally suffice unto themselves" by way of this unity of Reason. For Marcel, the relationship among thinking beings would have a meaning: sociality. It would have this meaning in the summons of a You by an I, in what Buber calls by the primary word "I-Thou," which would be the principle and the basis—uttered or implicit—of all dialogue. This word would be radically distinguished from

the other primary word, "I-It."⁶ The latter would express the knowledge of an I investing an "object" in its neutrality submissive to the act of knowledge that assimilates it and by which, according to Husserlian terminology, the assimilated object fills intentions. The "I-It" would designate the *subject* of idealist philosophy in relation with the world, referring to things and to humans treated as things. It would designate within discourse itself the reference of the Saying [*Dire*] to these realities and to the conjunctures that the Saying narrates or exhibits.

What is significant in this distinction is the original and irreducible character of the fundamental word, I-Thou: the I-It, as knowledge, does not found the I-Thou. The new philosophy of dialogue teaches that to invoke or to summon the other man as a *you* [*tu*], and to speak to him, does not depend upon a prior *experience* of the other; it does not derive, in any case, the meaning of the "you" from this experience. The sociality of dialogue is not a knowledge of sociality, dialogue is not the experience of the conjunction between men who speak to one another. Dialogue would be an event of spirit, at least as irreducible and as old as the *cogito*. In effect, for Buber, the Thou *par excellence* is invoked in the invisible Eternal Thou—nonobjectifiable, unthematizable—of God. For Gabriel Marcel, to name God in the third person would be to miss Him. There would be in dialogue, in the I-You, beyond the spirituality of knowledge that is *filled* by the *world* and in the world, the opening of transcendence.

Simultaneously, in dialogue is hollowed out an absolute distance between the I and the You, absolutely separated by the inexpressible secret of their intimacy, each being unique in its kind as *I* and as *you*, each one absolutely other in relation to the other, without common measure or domain available for some sort of coincidence (an inexpressible secret that is the other for me; a secret to which, for all time, I accede only by apprehension; a mode of existing of the other as other). On the other hand, it is also there that unfolds—or intervenes, disposing the *I* as *I* and the *you* as *you*—the extraordinary and immediate relation of dialogue, which transcends this distance without suppressing it or recuperating it, as does the gaze that crosses the distance separating it from an object in the world, while comprehending and encompassing that distance. Here is a way of acceding to the other different from that of knowing him: to approach the neighbor.

Perhaps in thinking of the remarkable distinction Franz Rosenzweig makes in the human, between the *individual* belonging to the world and

always comparable to another individual, and *ipseity* (*die Selbstheit*);⁷ in thinking of the solitude of the *Selbstheit* in which the I stands (and, to our mind, for which the secret of its psyche is the "how")—perhaps this is how we shall be able to measure, despite the relations among individuals, the ontological separation between human beings and appreciate the transcendence that gapes between them. We shall be able to measure, consequently, the extra-ordinary transitivity of dialogue or proximity, and the supra-ontological—or religious—signification of sociality or human proximity. The solitude of *Selbstheit*, according to Rosenzweig, must not be understood as Heidegger does, who makes it a *modus deficiens* of *Mitsein*.⁸ In Rosenzweig, it would concern an *isolation* coming in no way from oneself and having no memory of community, yet an isolation foreign also to the separation of things that, as individuals, already belong "without knowing each other" to a common genus. It would concern a "nothing in common with anyone or anything" isolation, which has no need, we add incidentally, for a "transcendental reduction" of some kind to signify an "out of the world."

Absolute distance: one would be wrong to think of this as a logician would do, in the purely formal notion of a gap between terms of some sort, already distinct inasmuch as the one is not the other. The distance or absolute alterity of transcendence signifies *by itself* the difference and the relationship between the I and the You as interlocutors, in relation to which the notion of a "term of some sort" of the "something in general" (*etwas überhaupt*) is a formal abstraction. The concrete is the absolute distance and the relation of dialogue, older than any distinction of terms in any sort of conjunction. This absolute distance is refractory to the synthesis that the synoptic gaze of a third would like to establish between two human beings in dialogue. The I *and* the You are not embraceable objectively, there is no *and* possible between them, they form no totality. There is no unity that might be produced in the mind of a third party "over their heads" or "behind their backs," and which might here form an assemblage—just as there is not, from I to You, a thematization of the You or an experience of the You. The "You" is not an "objectification" where one would have merely steered clear of the reification of the other man. The Encounter, or proximity, or sociality, is not of the same order as experience.

But in the saying [*le dire*] of the dialogue, in the summons of a You by the I, an extra-ordinary and immediate passage is cleared, stronger than

any ideal tie and any synthesis that the *I think* would accomplish in aspiring to equal and comprehend. This is a passage where there is no further passage. It is precisely because the *You* is absolutely other than the *I* that there is, between the one and the other, dialogue. There perhaps lies the paradoxical message of all philosophy of dialogue, or a way of defining spirit by transcendence, that is, by sociality, by the immediate relation to the other. A relation different from all the ties that are established within a world where thought, as knowledge, thinks to its measure, where perception and conception grasp and appropriate the given and take satisfaction from it. This is a relation that, for Buber, is *the Relation* and which was "in the beginning." Language would not be there to *express* states of consciousness, it would be the incomparable spiritual event of transcendence and sociality to which any effort of expression—any wanting to communicate a thought content—already refers. Franz Rosenzweig understands it at the level of Revelation in the eminent and religious sense of the term, which signifies for him the setting in relation of the elements of the absolute, which are isolated and refractory to synthesis and to assembly in a totality; refractory to some sort of conjunction in which they lose—as in idealism—their very life.

One may legitimately ask oneself whether the internal discourse of the *cogito* is not already a derivative mode of the conversation with the other; whether the linguistic symbolism that the soul uses in "conversing with itself" does not suppose a dialogue with an interlocutor other than itself; whether the very interruption of the spontaneous impulse of thought reflecting upon itself, all the way to the dialectical alternations of reasoning where my thought separates from and rejoins itself as if it were other than itself—whether this interruption does not bear witness to an *original and foregoing* dialogue. We may wonder, consequently, whether knowledge itself and all consciousness does not begin in language. Even if dialogue itself ends by *knowing itself*—as is attested at least by the pages the philosophers devote to this—it is reflection that discovers it. But reflection, which supposes the suspension of the spontaneity of life, already supposes its being placed in question by the Other [*l'Autre*], which would not have been possible without a prior dialogue, without the encounter with another [*d'autrui*].

Posited before the unity of the *self-consciousness*, which is equal to itself and makes itself equal to the world, is thus the encounter in dialogue which would be a thought thinking beyond the world. There is in this

radical difference between the *I* and the *You*, placed in the relationship of dialogue wherein the encounter is formed, not a simple failure of recognition of the one by the other, or of the synthesis of their coincidence and their identification. There is, rather, the surplus or the *better* of a beyond oneself, the surplus and the better of the *proximity* of the neighbor; "better" than the coincidence with self, despite or because of the difference separating them. "More" or "better," signified in dialogue, not by some supernatural voice interfering in the conversation, nor by some prejudgment. "More" or "better than" would be the gratuitous gift or the grace of the other's coming to meet me, of which Buber speaks. Yet the surplus of fraternity can go beyond the *satisfactions* that one still expects from gifts received, even if gratuitous! This the philosophers of dialogue do not always say, although this would certainly be the essential idea they have made possible. Dialogue is the non-indifference of the *you* to the *I*, a dis-inter-ested sentiment certainly capable of degenerating into hatred, but a chance for what we must—perhaps with prudence—call love and resemblance in love. In saying this, one is not duped by morality or naively subject to the ideas and values of an environment. It is in the dialogue of transcendence that the idea of the good rises, merely by the fact itself that, in the encounter, the *other counts* above all else. The Relationship where the *I* encounters the *You* is the original place and circumstance of the ethical coming [*avènement*]. The ethical fact owes nothing to values; it is values that owe everything to the ethical fact. The concreteness of the Good is the worth [*le valoir*] of the other man. It is only to some formalization that the ambivalence of worth appears, as undecidable, at equal distance between Good and Evil. In the worth of the other man, the Good is more ancient than Evil.

Dialogue is thus not merely a way of speaking. Its significance has a general reach. It is transcendence. The saying involved in dialogue would not be one of the possible forms of transcendence but its original mode. Better again, transcendence has no meaning except by way of an *I* saying *You*. It is the *dia* of the dialogue. In the concrete context of the human, transcendence is thus a concept at least as valuable as that of immanence in the world, the ultimacy of which transcendence places in question. Contrary to the celebrated Heideggerian analyses, the fact of humanity approached from dialogue would reintroduce into philosophic reflection the *beyond* the world, without this signifying a simple recourse to what Nietzsche calls "the worlds behind the world" in the sense of traditional

metaphysics. There lie new structures and conceptualization, having the resonance of a general philosophy beyond the anthropological and theological thematic. Buber shall insist upon the novel and primordial⁹ pattern of the relation that one cannot close up within the psyche of the I or the You. It is the *between* (*Zwischen*), an origin that disposes the I as I and the You as You, and which evidently could not be understood anew as a third instance, a subject, or a substance that would here play a mediating role. This signifies a break not only with psychology but also with the ontological notions of both substance and subject, in order to assert a new modality of the between-the-two, itself signifying the ontology and the psyche of co-presence and of sociality. Above... rather than between-the-two.

Although the systematic significance of the new analysis of dialogue may be essential, its anthropological signification and its theological aspect must be underscored. One can not evoke here all the concrete descriptions to which the philosophical literature relative to dialogue gives rise. To the phenomenology of intentionality is juxtaposed something like a phenomenology of the Relation, often taking on a negative appearance. Thus, to the irreversible "polarity" of the intentional act—*ego-cogito-cogitatum*, where the *ego* pole can not be converted into the object pole—one opposes the reversibility or the reciprocity of the I-You: the I says "you" to a You who, as an I, says "you" to the I. The *activity* of the saying in the dialogue is *ipso facto* the passivity of the listening, the word in its very spontaneity is exposed to the response; the you is summoned as "exclusivity" and as not belonging to the world, even if the encounter itself is in the world; whereas intentionality approaches the object always against the horizon of the world. That a human spirituality might be possible which does not begin in knowledge, or in the psyche as experience, and that the relation to the you in its purity be the relation to the invisible God, is no doubt a new view on the human psyche, which was already emphasized above. Yet this is also very important for the orientation of theology: the God of prayer, of invocation, would be more ancient than the God deduced from the world or from some sort of *a priori* radiance and stated in an indicative proposition. The old biblical theme of man made in the image of God takes on a new meaning, but it is in the "you" and not in the "I" that this resemblance is announced. The very movement that leads to another leads to God.

It is in the extension of the I-Thou relationship and that of the social

existence with man that, for Buber, the relation to God is produced. There also is the probable recovery of the biblical theme in which divine epiphany is always awaited starting from the encounter with the other man, who is approached as a you beginning from ethics. Need one recall texts such as Chapter 58 of Isaiah? Need one recall the perhaps less celebrated pages of the Pentateuch? In a significant way, the formula "fear of God" appears there in a series of verses that especially enjoin respect for man and concern for the neighbor; as if the order to fear God was not only added to enforce the orders "not to insult a deaf man"; "not to place an obstacle on the path of a blind man" (Leviticus 19:14); "not to wrong one another" (Leviticus 25:17); and "not to accept interest, nor profit from a fallen brother, though he be a stranger or a newcomer" (Leviticus 25:16, etc.). Yet it is as though the "fear of God" were defined by these ethical injunctions; as though the "fear of God" were this fear for another.

From Dialogue to Ethics

The descriptions of dialogue, and all this "phenomenology" of the I-Thou, have been reproached with proceeding negatively in relation to intentionality and to the structures of transcendental consciousness. They have been upbraided for practicing a negative psychology or negative ontology—the way others develop a negative theology—which would put into question the philosophical autonomy of the new thought. Yet dialogue, understood here as proximity throughout this conception, signifies the proper place and concrete circumstance of transcendence or the Relation, according to its double meaning of absolute distance and the crossing of this by language in the immediacy of the I-you. Would this dialogue not harbor an ethical dimension in which the rupture of dialogue with transcendental models of consciousness would appear more radically?

Let us note, first, that the philosophy of dialogue is oriented toward a concept of the ethical (*Begriff des Ethischen*) that is separated from the tradition that derives the ethical (*das Ethische*) from knowledge and from Reason as the faculty of the universal, and sees in the ethical a layer superposed upon being. Ethics would thus be subordinated either to prudence, or to the universalization of the maxim of action (where it was, to be sure, a question of the respect for the human person, but only as a secondary formulation, and deduced from the categorical imperative), or

again to the contemplation of a hierarchy of values constructed like a Platonic world of ideas. Ethics begins in the I-You of dialogue insofar as the I-You signifies the worth of the other man or, still more precisely, insofar as within the immediacy of the relation to the other man alone (and without recourse to some general principle) a meaning such as worth [*valoir*]¹⁰ is sketched out. This is a worth attached to man coming out of the value of the You, or of the man who is other; a value attached to the other man. The descriptions of the "encounter" in Buber never avoid a certain axiological tonality. But does not even the immediacy itself of the Relation and its exclusivity, as opposed to the negation of the mediating or diverting terms, signify a certain *urgency* in the attitude to take with regard to the other man, a certain urgency about the intervention? Is not the very opening of the dialogue already a way for the I to uncover itself, to deliver itself, a way for the I to place itself at the disposition of the You? Why should there be saying? Would it be because the thinking being has *something* to say? But why should he have *to say* it? Why *would it not suffice* him to think about this thing which he thinks? Does he not say what he thinks precisely because it goes beyond that which *suffices him* and because *language* carries this deep movement? Beyond sufficiency, in the indiscretion of saying "you" [*tutoiement*] and of the vocative case, a demand for responsibility and an allegiance are signified simultaneously.

To be sure, in Buber, the I-Thou relationship is frequently also described as the pure face-to-face of the encounter, as a harmonious co-presence, as an eye to eye. Yet are the face-to-face, the encounter, and the "eye to eye" really reduced to a play of reflections in a mirror and to simple optical relations? In this extreme formalization, the Relation empties itself of its "heteronomy" and of its transcendence of as-sociation. From the outset, the I-you comprises an obligation in its immediacy, that is, as urgency and without recourse to any universal law. By its own meaning, it is inseparable from the valorization of the other as other in the You, and from a compulsion to service in the I. The worth of the You, the deaconship of the I—such are the semantic depths of the "primary word," the ethical depths.

There would be an inequality, a dissymmetry, in the Relation, contrary to the "reciprocity" upon which Buber insists, no doubt in error. Without a possible evasion, as though it were elected for this, as though it were thus irreplaceable and unique, the I as I is the servant of the You in Dialogue. An inequality that may appear arbitrary; unless it be—in the word

addressed to the other man, in the ethics of the welcome—the first religious service, the first prayer, the first liturgy, the religion out of which God could first have come to mind and the word "God" have made its entry into language and into good philosophy. It is not, of course, that the other man must be taken for God or that God, the Eternal Thou, be found simply in some extension of the You. What counts here is that, from out of the relation to the other, from the depths of Dialogue, this immeasurable word signifies for thought, and not the reverse.

The way in which God takes on meaning in the I-You relation, to become a word of language, invites us to a new reflection. This reflection is not the subject of the present study. What was important here was to make it be felt that dialogue—contrary to *knowledge* and contrary to certain descriptions of the philosophers of dialogue—is a thinking of the *unequal*, a thought thinking *beyond* the given. It was to show the modality according to which, in dialogue or more precisely in the ethics of dialogue, in my deaconship with respect to the other, I think more than I can grasp. This is the modality according to which the ungraspable takes its meaning, or as one might also put it, the modality according to which I think more than I think. This is not a pure derision, nor a simple failure of knowledge. It is perhaps what is signified by the Cartesian paradox of the idea of the Infinite in me.

12. That which makes possible the conception of a consciousness forming a part of the world which is given to it, the famous *psychological consciousness* which Husserl opposes to the *reduced consciousness*.

13. We must put in question the Heideggerian phenomenology of affectivity, anchored in anguish, and where the fear of God should have to be reduced to the fear of sanction.

14. [In Aristotelian logic, “apophansis” refers to a statement that can be determined to be true or false.—Trans.]

15. One could not speak of the signification of the *question* for the very structure of the spiritual and of thinking without recalling the thesis of Jeanne Delhomme, *La Pensée Interrogative* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), and without referring to this essential book.

16. Maurice Blanchot, “Discours sur la patience,” in *Le Nouveau Commerce* 30–31 (spring 1975), pp. 19–44. [Translated by Ann Smock in *The Writing of the Disaster*.—Trans.]

17. See “God and Philosophy,” in this volume. Also see *OBBE*.

18. See in chapter 5 of *OBBE*, an attempt to show the birth of thematization, of discourse and of theory in ethical signification. *OBBE*, pp. 131–71; *AEAE*, pp. 167–218 [206–66].

19. On this theme, see our study “From Consciousness to Wakefulness,” in this volume. Also see our study “Philosophie et éveil,” in *Etudes Philosophiques* 3 (July–Sept. 1977), pp. 307–17. [For a discussion of a “pre-originary susceptibility,” see *OBBE*, pp. 122–29, *AEAE*, pp. 157–64 [195–205].—Trans.]

Transcendence and Evil

NOTE: The present text is based on a paper delivered on July 10, 1978, at the Seventh International Congress of Phenomenology, held in Paris and organized by the World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning. It was first published as “Transcendence et Mal” in *Le Nouveau Commerce* 41 (autumn 1978), pp. 55–78. [Translated by Alphonso Lingis in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, pp. 175–86.—Trans.]

1. J.-L. Marion, *L'Idole et la Distance* (Paris: Grasset, 1977).

2. This is an interpretation that one cannot set aside forever; through it, the thematization and discourse of science are superposed on every rupture and place transcendence in question. Without impeding the return of the lived and of the interruptive meaning. Can transcendence have a meaning which is other than ambiguous for a modern? But the same goes for the world. Cf. the lines that close the present essay.

3. Philippe Nemo, *Job et l'excès du Mal* (Paris: Grasset, 1978).

4. [John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson have translated *Zuhandenheit* as

“readiness-to-hand”; see their translation of Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 48 (p. 25 in *Sein und Zeit*). They translate *Stimmung* as “mood”; *Being and Time*, pp. 172–79 (pp. 134–40 in *Sein und Zeit*).—Trans.]

5. Cf. our attempt at a phenomenology in this direction in “Le Temps et l'autre” (*Time and the Other*).

6. [“Le Toi,” which I am not translating as “The Thou” because of its resonance with the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber.—Trans.]

7. [The French text reads, “a sens ce qui concerne l'alternative du bien et du mal extrême pour l'attente d'une âme” (p. 212).—Trans.]

8. This “audacity” is also lacking in Buber, to whom the discovery of the relation I-Thou appears immediately as a new mode of being; the You of God being only a more intense manner of being, the divinity of God losing itself thus in its mode of existence, which would be the final sense of His epiphany, as it also is of the disclosed world.

9. Nemo would not like the formula “ethics precedes ontology” for still another reason. He, like almost all the philosophical literature in our day, identifies ethics with the Law (which is the consequence of ethics), while the evil that awakes us to the You of God would be precisely contestation of the Law and of the technological spirit which, for Nemo, is tied to it. The morality of the Law would only be, for him, a technique for drawing rewards to oneself and avoiding punishments. We think that, primordially, ethics signifies obligation toward Another [*Autrui*]; we think that it leads us to the Law and to gratuitous service, which is not a principle of technique.

10. These dimensions, according to the Husserlian teachings reproduced in *Experience and Judgment* start from the position of an individual substrate, torn from the background of the world; from a substrate exposed to the “passive syntheses” of explication and to the “modalization” of belief in which this position is made. These syntheses are then taken up in the *categorical activity* of the judgment properly so called. It is the dimensions of the affirmation of an impetus in its *being* and in its properties, assembled into syntheses and into a system: a coherent universe without back-worlds; a reign of the Same without any “other scene.” [See Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, §§16–21, for Husserl's discussion of passive syntheses and modalizations.—Trans.]

Dialogue

NOTE: The French version of a study entitled *Le Dialogue*, written for the encyclopedia *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1979); published in French by the Istituto di Studi Filosofici (Rome, 1980).

1. [Levinas is playing upon the etymological sense of *maintenant*, or “now,” to mean “hand-holding”: presence is that which we grasp figuratively or literally. The verb *maintenir*, or “to maintain, keep, or hold, or uphold,” illustrates this original sense well. Hence we translate *main-tenant* as “main-tenance” even though the English term implies a carrying on or keeping up.—Trans.]

2. [“Es gehört zu den tiefsten und richtigsten Einsichten, die sich in der *Kritik der Vernunft* finden, dass die Einheit, die das Wesen des Begriffs ausmacht, also die ursprünglich-synthetische Einheit der Apperzeption, als Einheit des: Ich denke, oder des Selbstbewusstseins erkannt wird.” See Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweiter Teil*, Georg Lasson, ed. (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1923), p. 211 (*Hegel’s Science of Logic*, p. 584).—Trans.]

3. [Literally, “bodily there” or “corporeally present.”—Trans.]

4. Husserl, *Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, p. 260. [*Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 258.—Trans.]

5. [Gabriel Marcel, *Journal Métaphysique* (1914–23) (Paris: N. F. R. Gallimard, 1927), p. 207. Also see “Journal Métaphysique, III (Fragments): Le Sentiment du Profond,” in *Fontaine* 51 (Apr. 1946). Also see Jean Wahl’s discussion of the *Journal Métaphysique* in “Le Journal Métaphysique de Gabriel Marcel,” in *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale* (Jan.–Mar. 1930). Translated into English by Bernard Wall, *Metaphysical Journal* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1952).—Trans.]

6. [For a definition of humanity’s two “primary words,” see M. Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald G. Smith (New York: Collier Books, Macmillan, 2d ed., 1958 and 1987), pp. 33.—Trans.]

7. [*Selbstheit* is literally “selfhood.”—Trans.]

8. [John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson have translated *Mitsein* as “Being-with”; see *Being and Time*, p. 308 (p. 264 in *Sein und Zeit*).—Trans.]

9. [The French text reads, “sur le dessein original et originel de la relation qu’on ne peut pas enfermer dans le psychisme.” In French there are two adjectives for the English adjective “original.” The first, *original*, implies that which is first in the sense of being novel or inventive; the second, *originel*, expresses originality as primordially.—Trans.]

10. [Although the French infinitive *valoir* admits as a standard translation “to be worth,” there is no attachment intended here between this value and human *being* or existence. This value is not situated in the first place at the level of being. Cf. *OBBE*, p. 198n28; *AEAE*, p. 158–59n28 [196 n. 1].—Trans.]

Notes on Meaning

NOTE: The ideas assembled in these notes were presented in the form of two lectures at the Facultés Universitaires Saint Louis, in Brussels, in November 1979. The present text was published for the first time in *Nouveau Commerce* 49

(spring 1981), pp. 99–127. Sections 7 and 8 were reworked, and a few material rectifications were added to the other parts of the first version thereof.

1. “Die Intentionalität wird befragt, worauf sie eigentlich hinauswill.” See Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik*, p. 9. [*Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p. 10.—Trans.]

2. [The French text reads, “la présence se produit main-tenant.” A common word for “now,” the French *maintenant* is composed of *main-*, hand, and *tenant*, from the verb *tenir*, “to hold.” Levinas is here playing on the role of the hand in the production of being.—Trans.]

3. [Literally “givenness.”—Trans.]

4. [See Husserl, *Logical Investigations*.—Trans.]

5. [The French text reads, “Comme si, ignorée d’autrui, que déjà dans la nudité de son visage, elle me concerne, elle ‘me regardait’ avant sa confrontation avec moi, avant d’être la mort qui me dévisage moi-même” (p. 245).—Trans.]

6. [See, for example, *TaI*, pp. 194–201; *TeI*, pp. 168–75; and indirectly in *OBBE*, pp. 11 ff., 86–94, 138 ff.; *AEAE*, pp. 13 ff. [25 ff.]; 108–20 [137–51]; 175 [216].—Trans.]

7. [As a salutation, “À-Dieu” implies “I commend you to God,” or “Go, and God be with you.” Levinas plays on the preposition and the literal sense of the construction repeatedly in this section as elsewhere.—Trans.]

8. [Cf. Chapter 5, “God and Philosophy,” n. 45.—Trans.]

9. Cf. *OBBE*, p. 126; *AEAE*, p. 162 [201].

10. [The utterance is negative when it says “adieu,” as a final farewell.—Trans.]

11. Abraham, father of the believers, intervened in Genesis (19:23–32) for Sodom, while recalling that it was “cinders and dust.” A Talmudic apologue (Sota) reminds us that the “lustral water” that, according to Numbers 19, purifies those impurities due to contact or to the nearness/proximity of the dead, is a water in which are mixed, according to the ritual, the ashes of burnt “russet-colored cow.” The rite of purification thus referred to Abraham’s plea [in defense of Sodom]. The humanity of Abraham is stronger than his own death. Abraham would not have been abashed by his own mortality, which he evoked in his prayer to intervene against the death of the other man.

12. On the passage from the “for-the-other” to the equity of justice, see *OBBE*, p. 161; *AEAE*, p. 205 [250–51].

13. [Playing on the dual sense of *regarder* as “looking at” and “to concern,” Levinas here writes, “Qu’il me regarde ou non, il ‘me regarde.’”—Trans.]

14. Here, in the guise of a biblical fable, I will recall the books that seem to constitute the “bible” of the contemporary literary world: Kafka’s works. Beyond the labyrinths and the blind alleys of the Power, the Hierarchy, and the