FROM EXILE TO HOSPITALITY

A KEY TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Abi Doukhan

The question of hospitality and of the welcoming of otherness is central to the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. In his *Adieu* to Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida highlights the primordial role of the concept of hospitality in the philosophy of Levinas and goes as far as to call Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* "an immense treatise of *hospitality*.[1] And indeed, numerous commentators have discussed this dimension of hospitality in the thought of Levinas.[2] Few, however, have explored the *exilic* structure particular to that hospitality and that welcoming. And although many commentators have explored dimensions of exile in Levinas' philosophy–pertaining to his biography,[3] his style,[4] his vocabulary[5]—none has, to my knowledge, attempted to show the centrality of the concept of exile in the totality of Levinas's work, as well as the fundamental role this concept plays in articulating the structure of the hospitality of otherness. It is my thesis, however, that the philosophy of hospitality worked out in Levinas' thought is intimately connected to exile. While the theme of hospitality permeates the work of Levinas, it is articulated, at every step, in relation to the concept of exile. My goal in this essay will be to show this centrality of the concept of exile in Levinas, as well as how this concept illuminates the Levinassian thematic of hospitality.

We can distinguish two main trends in Levinas' treatment of exile. The first deals with the exile of the face with regard to the world of objects constituted by the self. According to Levinas, the face of the other is not another object in the world which the self can comprehend and dispose of at will. On the contrary, the face escapes all attempts by the self to grasp or objectify it, thus remaining exiled from its world. But this exile raises a number of questions. Must not the face be at some point be grasped as an object if a relationship with it is to be possible? If the face escapes all attempts on the part of the self to constitute it into an object of the world, if the face refuses to be encountered within the world of the self, how is an approach of the face to ever take place? An approach to the face is possible, according to Levinas, only at the price of a profound transformation of the structures of the self. The self must itself experience exile—a de-centering, a de-positing of itself as center of the universe—if an encounter with the exilic dimension of the other is to be possible. The approach to the face is thus itself structured as an exile, as a movement of the self outside of itself, outside of its situation as origin and foundation, into the realm of otherness. This is the second sense of exile in Levinas's work. But this exile also raises a number of questions. How can one account for this sudden shift in the structures of the self—of a self understood as the origin of the world to a self exiled, torn from its own world towards the other? What provokes this exile? And what's more, how can such an exile lead to hospitality? It is difficult to see how an exiled self, torn from its world, could become a source of hospitality.

It is these two problems that I want to address in this article: How is a hospitality of the exiled face possible and how can an exiled self offer such a hospitality? In both cases, the condition of exile seems to be the very antithesis of hospitality. It is difficult to see how the face which resolutely remains exiled with regards the structures of the self could ever lend itself to hospitality. It is also difficult to see how a self, itself exiled, could ever be capable of hospitality. In this essay I shall first deal with the problem posed by the exile of the face and after that with the problem posed by the exile of the self in an attempt to show how, ultimately, exile constitutes the very structure of hospitality of the face.

The Exile of the Face

The exile of the face is described by Levinas in a key passage in *Totality and Infinity*

which reads as follows:

> The epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity. The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger; but this poverty and *exile* which appeal to my powers, address me, do not deliver themselves over to these powers as givens, remain the expression of the face.[6]

This passage has layers of meaning and I shall endeavor to uncover each one throughout this essay. One of these meanings is that of an exile of the other from the world of the self, from the constituted world of perceptions and conceptualizations of the self. The other does not "deliver" himself or herself to the cognitive and perceptive powers of the self. The other remains in exile (*ex-sul*): outside (*ex-*) of the world (*sul*) constituted by the self. There is always something within the face of the other which escapes cognition, which escapes our vision, our understanding. While the face of the other does lend itself to vision and to a limited understanding of its features and expressions, there is something within its appearing that escapes, that refuses to appear. Levinas observes that "the transcendence of the face is at the same time its absence from this world into which it enters, the exiling of a being" (TI 75).

But this phenomenology of otherness raises an important question: How is the other to appear *outside* of the world of objects. If there is to be appearance, must it not always be *within* a world, within a field of vision, of perception?[7] How can something appear *outside* of the world of light, outside of the world of visible objects? How can something *appear* in the world and yet present itself as an *absence*? These are precisely Derrida's objections to Levinas's descriptions of the exilic character of the face. For the self to enter into a relationship with the face, it is necessary, according to Derrida, that the latter manifests itself, exposes itself to the objectifying activity of the self, lets itself be seen in the context of a world:

> My world is the opening in which all experience occurs, including, as the experience par excellence, that which is transcendence toward the Other as such. Nothing can appear outside of my *appartenance* to "my world" for an "I am." Whether it is suitable or not, whether it appears to me monstrous (due to whatever prejudices) or not, I must stand firm before the primordial fact, from which I cannot turn my glance for an instant, as a philosopher.[8]

According to Derrida, it is impossible to speak of a relationship with alterity without such an original moment of "violence" by which this alterity lets itself be encompassed within my world, "shows itself" to the self:

> If light is the element of violence, one must combat light with a certain other light, in order to avoid the worst violence, the violence of the night which precedes or represses discourse. . . . The philosopher . . . must speak and write within this war of light, a war in which he always already knows himself to be engaged; a war which he knows is inescapable, except by denying discourse, that is by risking the worst violence.[9]

There must be a presentation, a phenomenalization of the face in my world for a relationship to be possible. How can we then speak, with Levinas, of a relation with the face without prior vision of that face?

Levinas explains this paradoxical way of manifestation by having recourse to the concept of "nakedness." The other appears in my field of vision, as physical body, as a face rich in features and expressions. And yet something of that other escapes me. I perceive, constitute the other as a body within my world, and yet, along with this body, I sense that something in that other escapes me, I sense that I can never gain full knowledge of him or her. Levinas speaks of this mystery or secret of the other in terms of the "nakedness" of the other:

> The nakedness of the face is not what is presented to me because I disclose it, what would therefore be presented to me, to my powers, to my eyes, to my perceptions, in a light exterior to it. (TI 75)

For Levinas, nakedness is used metaphorically to describe that part of the other that escapes the visible "exteriority" of the world. Nakedness must be understood in Levinas as that which remains hidden within the visible world of things, sceneries, and institutions. Nakedness, can never be disclosed within the world of the self and, in this sense, it reveals an exilic dimension.[10] The other remains exterior (*ex-*)

from my world (*sul*). It is in this sense that Levinas speaks of the other as the "stranger" who is "not wholly in my site" (TI 39). Levinas speaks of this infinite transcendence of the other as "infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign" (TI 194). The nakedness of the other speaks thus of his or her exile from the objective and discovered world originating from the self; it remains exiled from the world of the self.

But if the nakedness and mystery of the other remains forever inaccessible to vision and understanding of the self, how is a genuine encounter with the other *qua* other at all possible? How do we encounter the other beyond appearances? How may we access the genuine self of the other? If all of our attempts to understand the other in effect distanciate us from this other, how are we to approach this other in a way that will allow us to have a genuine encounter with him or her? According to Levinas, there is another way to relate to otherness which does not pass by cognition but which allows for a genuine encounter with that other. While the face will not be approached on the cognitive level, it is nevertheless possible to approach it, according to Levinas, on the sensible level. To try to encounter the other on a cognitive level is bound to fail for Levinas because the other always escapes the mastery of the self. Yet, it is possible, according to Levinas, to encounter this other from the standpoint of the sensible world.[11] The sensible dimension thus becomes the *lieu* of "proximity," of what Levinas terms a genuine encounter with the other *qua* other:

> The sensible is superficial only in its role being cognition. In the ethical relationship with the real, that is, in the relationship of proximity which the sensible establishes, the essential is committed.[12]

For Levinas, the sensible is the context of the ethical, the support of the ethical. But does one not immediately grasp this connection between the sensible dimension and the ethical? How does the sensible constitute the medium wherein an ethical relationship is susceptible of taking place? How does the sensible constitute a better context to an approach of the exilic dimension of the face? Why is the standpoint of the sensible better than that of the cognitive world to approach otherness? And, what is this standpoint? Before we can understand the way the other appears within that sensible world, we must first understand what Levinas means by sensible world.

Before we perceive objects and turn our interest to understanding the world around us, our experience of the world is, according to Levinas, a sensible one.[13] Before all cognitive attempts to give meaning to the world, we experience this very world as already given and as a source of enjoyment. Before we see the world as a multiplicity of objects, we "live from" the world, "we live from 'good soup,' air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc. ...These are not objects of representations. We live from them" (TI 110). Before endeavoring to understand the molecular structure of living things, or the physical properties of light, before we even come to terms with the things in the world as "objects" distinct from ourselves, we live from them, we experience their effect on us, we enjoy them. This, according to Levinas, is a sensible way of relating to the world. This sensible way comes before and independently of any cognitive and conceptual understanding of the world. It is pre-conceptual and pre-cognitive.

The sensible world is thus an experience of otherness which does not pass through an act of mastery on the part of the self. Moreover, the experience of the sensible world precedes any act of mastery or power on the part of the self and affects this self before any act of constitution or mastery on its part. In that sense, the act of "living from . . ." can be understood as constituting an experience of genuine otherness, of an otherness which will not be derived from a cognitive action from the part of the self, but which precedes and affects the self. The experiences of feeling the warmth of the sunlight on one's skin or of desiring a fruit and tasting it are all experiences which offer themselves to the self before any initiative on its part—they surprise the self, they affect the self. "Living from . . ." thus can be understood as the first awakening of the self to a dimension outside of itself. It is in this sense that for Levinas, the experience of enjoyment paves the way to the encounter with genuine otherness. Enjoyment, because it precedes the self's activities and awakens it to otherness, can thus be understood as one of the modes of "proximity," of an approach to genuine otherness.[14]

Yet, this conception of enjoyment as signifying transcendence becomes problematic upon closer analysis, when one realizes that, while the movement of enjoyment does allow for an experience of an otherness preceding all initiatives of the self, it ultimately re-absorbs this otherness into the self in a movement of assimilation and appropriation. In the act of enjoyment, the "exteriority" of life is ultimately assimilated, repatriated to the self and this is so, in spite of its obvious external character. The tasting of a fruit or the sensation of sunlight are reduced to experiences of the *self*. They remain pure sensations of the self. And indeed, enjoyment is without object; it is not worried about that which it is the enjoyment of:

> To sense is precisely to be sincerely content with what is sensed, to enjoy, to refuse the unconscious prolongations, to be thoughtless, that is, without ulterior motives, unequivocal, to break with all the implications. (TI 138–39)

The enjoyment of a given sensation occurs before any synthesis, before any objective preoccupation with the object of that sensation. Enjoyment is not worried about the objective support of the qualities, of the sensations it is enjoying; it does not aim at the *felt* but at the *feeling*.

One comes thus to wonder how enjoyment, inasmuch as it is preoccupied with the *feeling* over the *felt,* truly constitutes a movement of transcendence on the part of the self. If enjoyment does not prolong its sensation into an object, into an entity exterior to itself, how then does it transcend itself? Does not enjoyment then become a mere subjective experience which never leaves the immanent sphere of the ego cogito? One cannot speak in terms of a true opening of transcendence inasmuch as "the self sufficiency of the *enjoying* measures the egoism or the ipseity of the Ego and the same. Enjoyment is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution" (TI 118). Far from constituting a transcendent dimension with regards to the self, enjoyment constitutes the world as "mine." The self that enjoys is "at home" in the world:

> The world, foreign and hostile, should, in good logic, alter the I. But the true and primordial relation between them, and that in which the I is revealed precisely and preeminently the same, is produced as a *sojourn* in the world, the *way* of the I against the "other" of the world consists in *sojourning* in *identifying oneself* by existing there *at home with oneself*. (TI 37)

In the world which emerges from enjoyment, beings have meaning, definition only with regards to myself. While the movement of enjoyment implies an experience which precedes all cognitive action on the part of the self, it nevertheless ends up making sense of the world as belonging to the self, as "mine". According to Levinas, "an energy that is other . . . becomes in enjoyment *my* own energy, *my* strength" (TI 111; my italics). Thus the world is no more characterized as a dimension existing objectively and distinctly from the self, but as existing *for* the self. As Levinas observes, "the world is for me" (TI 137).

One can however wonder how a relationship with the alterity of the other is possible in a context where everything is mine. Can otherness subsist in a world where everything is mine? Can there be an other in such a world? Levinas himself defines enjoyment as a total ignorance of the dimension of the other:

> In enjoyment I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone. Not against the Others, not 'as for me'–but entirely deaf to the Other, outside of all communication and all refusal to communicate–without ears like a hungry stomach. (TI 134)

How then can the dimension of the other appear within the sensible world? One does not at this point understand how the sensible world can possibly constitute the *lieu* of an encounter with otherness.

The other nevertheless manifests himself or herself in such a world; but he or she does so as *exiled*. This exile is not, however, the cognitive exile of a face which refuses to be grasped or understood. The exile of the face takes on a whole new meaning in the context of the sensible world of possessions. In such a world, the exile of the face takes on a much more concrete meaning and is experienced by the other as the exile of destitution and poverty. We must now understand in a totally different way the exile of the face encountered in the passage studied above:

> The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger; but this poverty and exile which appeal to my powers, address me, do not deliver themselves to these powers as givens, remain the expression of the face. (TI 213)

And indeed, in such a world—where everything is mine—the other can only appear as the destitute! There is no room in such a world for him or her. In a world defined wholly as *mine*, the other can only remain *exiled*. In a world where everything is my possession, there appears a being, which not only will not be possessed—at least on a cognitive level—but which presents himself or herself as the *dispossessed*—in that it is exiled from my "at home," it possesses nothing in a world where everything is mine. In a world possessed by the self and where the self is at home, the other can only appear as destitute, as not-at-home in that world, as exiled from that world. But if the other again presents him- or herself as exiled, as remaining on the margins of my world, how is the self to encounter him or her? What encounter is possible in a world where the other finds himself or herself marginalized, exiled, expulsed?

According to Levinas, an encounter is possible on the sensible level with the exiled other inasmuch as it profoundly differs from the cognitive relationship with the face. Whereas the cognitive exile of the face constituted an absence of the face, an escape of the face from the cognitive grasp of the self, the sensible exile has a wholly different structure: It does not withdraw from the self, but *affects* it. In fact, there can be no escaping this effect of the destitute other on the self, there is no choice in the matter. But the face does not directly affect the self, rather it affects it indirectly by affecting its relationship with the world, a relationship which Levinas characterizes, prior to the intrusion of the face, as innocent and happy. Indeed, before the intrusion of the destitute face, the self's relationship with the world is that of "happiness":

> Life is *love of life,* a relation with contents that are not my being but more dear than my being: thinking, eating, sleeping, reading, working, warming oneself in the sun . . . the reality of life is already on the level of happiness. . . . The final relation is enjoyment, *happiness*. (TI 112–13)

This happiness is, furthermore, experienced by the self as innocent:

> In enjoyment, I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone. Not against the Others, not "as for me . . ."—but entirely deaf to the Other, outside of all communication and all refusal to communicate–without ears, like a hungry stomach. (TI 134)

Before the intrusion of the destitute and exiled other, the whole world is mine to possess, and my possession is innocent—that is, it doesn't hurt anyone, it doesn't constitute a danger to others.

Everything changes, however, upon the intrusion of the destitute and exiled other. With the intrusion of the other, my relationship with the world as possession and mineness becomes, all of a sudden, problematic:

> Neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger, the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself. (TI 38)

The other casts a shadow upon that relationship of possession, his/her presence problematizes this relationship. Yet, at no point, does the other *threaten* my relationship of possession. Levinas is not here recapitulating the Sartrean descriptions of the phenomenalization of the other. Like Levinas, Sartre hinges the manifestation of the other on my relationship with the world.[15] And just like Levinas, the Sartrean other problematizes that relationship. But unlike Levinas, Sartre sees the intrusion of the other in the world of the self as, in effect, *stealing* the world from the self, as operating a shift in its ownership from the self to the other:

> Perceiving him as a man, on the other hand is not to apprehend an additive relation between the chair and him; it is to register an organization without distance of the things in my universe around that privileged object. To be sure, the lawn remains two yards away from him, but it is also a lawn bound to him in a relation which at once both transcends distance and contains it . . . we are dealing with a relation. . . . Inside of

> which there unfolds a spatiality which is not my spatiality, for instead of a grouping toward me of the objects, there is now an orientation which flees from me.[16]

For Sartre, then, the other appears as other in my world, not due to a particular way this other presents him or herself to the self, but in the way in which it impacts my relationship with the world. Whereas, before the intrusion of the other, the world was organized and grouped towards me as objects *for* me, for my own consciousness, the intrusion of the other reorganizes the world around a new point of consciousness—that of the other. The world "flees" from me and manifests itself as also constituting the world of the other, as also belonging to him or her. The other, in effect, steals the world from the self. The self sees itself, through the intrusion of the other as deposited from its prerogative as center and sole possessor of the world. The self, in Sartre's terms, is "decentralized."[17] Levinas's description of the intrusion of the other follows along those lines, yet without ever constituting a threat to the self.

According to Levinas, the other does not steal the world, thus becoming, through a violent act, co-possessor of my world. The other only casts a shadow on my possession, without ever losing his or her exilic and destitute character. The other never appropriates my world from me. He or she remains on the margins, on the edges of that world in his or her destitution. What he or she does do is transform my innocent possession into a problem. The joyous possession of the world by the self is profoundly altered by the intrusion, in that world, of the dispossessed. All of a sudden, the self realizes that its possession of the world in fact dispossesses the other. The self realizes that it is at the origin of the very exile of the other. In a world where everything is mine, what could possibly belong to the other? In such a world, the other can only shiver, hunger, and thirst, as nothing belongs to him or her—he or she is not at home in such a world, cannot survive in such a world. That the other cannot survive in a world defined as mine now casts a huge shadow on the innocent possession of the world: That possession now is experienced by the self to be at the very root of the other's suffering. The self's innocent enjoyment of life is now experienced as the usurpation of the other, as a threat to his or her own life and existence, as the very source of the other's exile and destitution.[18]

The Exile of the Self

The intrusion of the exiled other thus profoundly alters the self's happy immersion in the world, calling it into question:

> A calling into question of the same—which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same–is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. (TI 43)

The self is, upon the intrusion of the face, called out of its innocent enjoyment and forced to face the suffering of the other and its own responsibility in that suffering. This "calling out" of the self from the world by the other is not unlike Heidegger's own rendition of the self's emergence from the world. Just like in Levinas, the Heideggerian self or Dasein, is primordially immersed in the world, albeit not of enjoyment, but of material things (*Seiendes*). Thus, according to Heidegger, Dasein lives first and foremost in a preoccupation for material things that make up the routine existence of its life. There is no awareness at that point of any reality or concern outside that daily preoccupation for the material things of the world. There is one event, however, which will call into question this daily routine: It is the intrusion, in Dasein's world, of the event of death. This event forever changes the way Dasein relates to the world of beings and reveals the intrinsic precariousness of Dasein's being-in-the-world. Dasein realizes, upon encountering death, that its own being in the world is fragile and precarious, that it is not at home in the world, that this world does not truly hold it or shelter it from annihilation. In other words, it feels anxious:

> In anxiety, one feels "*uncanny*.". . . But here "uncanniness" also means "not-being-at-home." . . . As Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the "world." Every-

> day familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as Being-in-the-world. Being-in enters into the existential "mode" of the "*not-at-home*." Nothing else is meant by our talk about "uncanniness."[19]

The realization of the inescapable event of death through anxiety (*Angst*) is lived by Dasein as a feeling of uncanniness, of not feeling at home in the world (*Unheimlichkeit*). And it is precisely this feeling which will give birth in Dasein to the higher question of Being, thus ascribing to it a new destiny—that of becoming the guardian of the metaphysical question of Being.

Levinas's description of the intrusion of the other holds similarities with Heidegger's description of Dasein's encounter with death. Just like Heidegger's Dasein, Levinas's self is primordially immersed in the world of enjoyment. Like in Heidegger, the self is jolted out of that immersion by the intrusion of an other. The intrusion of the other is thus comparable to the intrusion of death in Dasein's world. Levinas himself subscribes to that comparison when he describes the event of the face as taking place in the shadow of death:

> In the being for death of fear I am not faced with nothingness, but faced with what is *against me*, as though murder, rather than being one of the occasion of dying, were inseparable from the essence of death, as though the approach of death remained one of the modalities of the relation with the Other. The violence of death threatens as a tyranny, as though proceeding from a foreign will. The order of necessity that is carried out in death is not like an implacable law of determinism governing a totality, but is rather like the alienation of my will by the Other. (TI 234)

Like death, the other puts the joyous possession of the self into question and calls it out of its innocent enjoyment of the world, the self finds itself expulsed from its immersion in the world by the other. The other sheds a shadow on its fundamental relationship of possession, and hence, on its feeling "at home" in the world. With the intrusion of the other, the self realizes that its being "at home" in the world is profoundly problematic. Indeed, not unlike Heidegger's account of death, the other causes to arise in the self a feeling of uncanniness with regards to its prior relationship to the world. Its at-home-ness in the world is, in effect, ruined by the intrusion of the destitute other.

The intrusion of the other hence has the effect of expulsing the self out of its being-at-home in the world. The intrusion of the other exiles the self from its situation as center and sole possessor of the universe:

> The I approached in responsibility is for-the-other, is a denuding, an exposure to being affected, a pure susceptiveness. It does not posit itself, possessing itself and recognizing itself; it is consumed and delivered over, dislocates itself, loses its place, is exiled, relegates itself into itself, but as though its very skin were still a way to shelter itself in being, exposed to wounds and outrage, emptying itself in a no-grounds, to the point of substituting itself for the other, holding on to itself only as it were in the trace of its exile.[20]

With the intrusion of the destitute other, the world will never be the same for the self. It will be forever tainted by the presence of that other. With this intrusion, the world of the self has lost its original purity and a shadow is now cast on every single possession of the self. In such a world, the self is not at home anymore, it finds itself a stranger within its own world, it finds itself expulsed, exiled from its very home. The question remains, however, as to how this exile can make way for a hospitality of the other? How can such a "dislocation", such a "loss," such an "exile" of the self render a welcoming of the other possible?[21]

Indeed, this feeling of uncanniness of the self can often lead to the very opposite of a hospitality. The intrusion of the other in the world of the self does not necessarily lead to a hospitable response on the part of the self. We are reminded of the story of Cain, alluded to by Levinas to that effect:

> Why does the other concern me? What is Hecuba to me? Am I my brother's keeper? These questions have meaning only if one has already supposed that the ego is concerned only with itself, is only a concern for itself. In this hypothesis it indeed remains incomprehensible that the absolute outside-of-me, the other, would concern me.[22]

Levinas is here alluding to Cain's question "am I my brother's keeper?" on the aftermath of his killing his brother Abel. This question is chilling in its refusal to admit to the other's pertinence in the self's world. In asking this question, Cain is, in effect, saying: What place does my brother have in my life? This question does not however emerge from nothing. There is an event which precedes this question, and which gives rise to this question: It is the event of the intrusion of Abel into the once-very secure world of Cain.

From the very beginning, in the story of Cain and Abel, the personality of Cain is described as the center of the universe. Even Cain's name alludes to his centrality in the world. The name Cain, *qain,* is related to the root *qanah*,[23] which means to possess or to master and alludes to his eventual working and settling on the land. Cain is described in the text as a subjectivity at home in the universe—the world is his and the land is his. He is the center of the universe. But there is one event which will profoundly alter this situation: It is the event of God's acceptance of Abel's offering over Cain's. The text does not explicitly say why Abel's offering was preferred by God over Cain's. But it does describe the traumatic effect that this event has on Cain. The text describes his face as "downcast" (Genesis 4:6) in a way that alludes more to a deep trauma than to actual anger. And indeed, this event is traumatic for Cain because, for the first time in his life, he is not the center of the universe. All of a sudden, Cain is not at home in his own world anymore, he is not the center of the universe anymore, there is somebody else—and that somebody else is taking away his very prerogative as sole possessor of the world. One can thus understand Cain's burning or pain as an experience of exile within his own world—he is expulsed from his world by the intrusion of Abel, God's favorite.

This exile experienced by Cain will sadly not lead to an event of hospitality, but, on the contrary, to the expulsion of the other out of his world through an act of murder: "Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him"(Genesis 4:8). Cain's exile was too painful for him to handle. His expulsion from his central position as sole owner of the world was too much for him to bear. It is a pain too deep, too personal, too intimate for him to be able to take. Thus his exile does not bring about an act of hospitality, far to the contrary: It leads to the expulsion of the other from one's world. How then can we interpret the exile of the self by the intrusion of the other as bringing forth a hospitality of that other. It seems a very unlikely and unnatural outcome of that exile. Indeed, the natural reaction of a subjectivity expulsed from its world by the intrusion of the face is to protect its supremacy by expulsing violently that other from its world, either by killing him or her or by ignoring him or her. The risk of losing one's central place in the world is often too hard to bear. We instinctively feel that by welcoming the other, our world will never be the same. Our neighborhoods, our schools, our parks, our sidewalks will not reflect who we are anymore, but will become populated by strangers. To welcome the other into our world is to lose everything that heretofore constituted and surrounded the self, it is to lose everything that made us who we are. We instinctively feel that to welcome the other will amount not only to losing our world, but ultimately, our identity, our foothold in life.

According to Levinas, however, while this murder—either by violence or by a refusal to acknowledge that other—constitutes a possible response to the intrusion of the other, it does not constitute the only response. There is another response possible, one which hears the plea of the other and acts upon it through the courageous act of generosity:

> Positively produced as the possession of the world I can bestow as a gift on the Other, that is, as a presence before a face. For the presence before a face, my orientation toward the Other, can lose the avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the other with empty hands. (TI 50)

Why courageous? Because to hear the plea of the destitute other amounts to recognizing that the world is not my sole possession, that the other also has a claim on it too; it is to acknowledge my own exile in the world, my own home-less-ness within a world which is no more unquestionably mine, which does not revolve around me anymore. Far from signifying my ownership of the world, generosity testifies to my own homelessness in the world, my own exile within the world. It is paradoxically

only when the self realizes, acknowledges its own exile within the world, its own destitution, that it becomes capable of generosity.

But while generosity is borne out of the self's sense of exile, it, by the same token, provides the other with a world, with a home. While, in enjoyment, "things" had meaning only inasmuch as they related to me, as objects of desire or possession, as "mine," the act of generosity has the effect of giving a whole new meaning to "things"–that of also belonging *to* the other, that of also being "his" or "hers":

> Things acquire a rational signification, and not only one of simple usage, because an other is associated with my relations with them. In designating a thing I designate it to the Other. The act of designating modifies my relation of enjoyment and possession with things, places the things in the perspective of the Other. (TI 209)

Thus, through the act of generosity, things do not signify anymore towards a self situated at the center and origin of the world, but also signify towards an other. Through the act of generosity, I allow for the emergence of things *out* of my world and towards the other:

> Utilizing a sign is therefore not limited to substituting an indirect relation for the direct relation with a thing, but permits me to render the things offerable, detach them from my own usage, alienate them, render them exterior. (TI 209)

The act of generosity designates to the other a world which heretofore was my sole possession. Through generosity, I give the other a world. The loss of the world of the self thus gives rise to a hospitality of the other within that world. The self's exile allows for a welcoming of the other.

This exile of the self is, in this sense, at the antipodes of the Sartrean descriptions of the self's expulsion from its world upon the intrusion of the other. The exile which the movement of generosity assumes does not signify, as it does for Sartre, the *usurpation* of the self's possession by the other, but the *welcoming* by the self of that dimension of otherness. The other never poses a threat to the self and partakes of the world of the self only upon an act of generosity by the self. Moreover, the act of generosity does not, as insinuated by Sartre, constitute a loss for the self—the self loses its world to the other—but, on the contrary, a gain. Indeed, while the exile assumed by generosity dispossesses the self of its at-homeness in the world, it does so by opening up, within that world, the transcendent dimension of otherness. The dimension of the other is opened within my "at home" through the movement of generosity. One can further describe this exile of the self in generosity as a contraction of the self permitting the opening, within the world of the self, of a space for the other[24]—that is, a hospitality of the other. The other could not co-exist with a consciousness defined as the center of the universe; there is no place for the other in a world where everything pertains to consciousness, where consciousness is at the center. It is necessary for the self to be de-centered, to find itself exiled and to accept this exile for the other to find a home in the world, for the other to find a place within the world. Through the gift of the world to the other, consciousness deposes itself of the prerogative of center of the universe, but, in so doing, it opens up a space for the other within the world. The dimension of the face thus can only enter the world of consciousness–that is, appear, be manifested in that world–if that consciousness opens up a space for it through the act of generosity which interrupts its own possessive grasp of the world.[25]

Thus, through the moment of generosity, the world of the self, once entirely organized around the self, widens to welcome—without ever possessing him or her—the dimension of the other. The homeland of the self has now become a haven for the other. The world is no more the place where the self accumulates its possessions, but the place of welcoming of the other: "This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality" (TI 27). The exile of the self furthermore allows for a hospitality of the other without ever reducing that other's intrinsic exile. The other remains outside the grasp of consciousness, outside its mastery and control, yet lets itself be approached by consciousness through the act of generosity. The other escapes the self-contained movement of theory, but allows itself to be approached through the ethical movement of generosity. It is therefore on the level of ethics that the other can be approached and not on the level of epistemology. The other always re-

mains exiled with regards to the world of theory, yet, he or she lets him- or herself be approached through the welcoming stance of generosity. Thus the ethical moment of encounter of otherness passes through a double-exile: the exile of the other with regards to the intentional grasp of consciousness, and the exile of the self–through generosity—which permits an approach of the other as exiled, yet as capable of receiving the hospitality of the self. Exile finds itself at the very core of the ethical moment in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. One cannot understand the structure of the ethical encounter without first understanding these two moments of exile. For without the first exile, whereby the other remains out of my grasp, there would be no otherness as such to serve as my interlocutor. And without my generous exile towards him or her, there would be no encounter with that ever-escaping and exiled other. Exile finds itself not only at the origin of the subjective awakening of consciousness to the dimension of the other, but also constitutes the very structure of the approach of that other, of an ethical relationship between the self and the other.

ENDNOTES

1. "Has anyone ever noticed? Although the word is neither frequently used nor emphasized within it, *Totality and Infinity* bequeaths to us an immense treatise of *hospitality.* This is borne out less by the occurrences of the word 'hospitality,' which are, in fact, rather rare, than by the links . . . that lead to this vocabulary of hospitality. In the concluding pages, for example, hospitality becomes the very name of what opens itself to the face, or, more precisely of what 'welcomes' it. The face always lends itself to a welcome, and the welcome welcomes only a face, the face that should be our theme today, but that, as we know from reading Levinas, must elude all thematiztion." Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 21.
2. Jean Greisch, for example, observes the centrality of the concepts of welcoming and hospitality in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas: "Si tout au long de *Totalité et Infini,* on assiste au développement d'une certaine idée de la subjectivité, 'la subjectivité comme accueillant Autrui, comme hospitalité' (TI , p. xv), il importe de prendre la pleine mesure de la radicalité de cette problématique. L'important n'est pas simplement la thématique de l'altérité déjà mise en chantier par d'autres philosophies de la tradition personnaliste, mais la manière dont elle est traitée par Lévinas. La découverte décisive est que, proche ou lointain, étranger ou compagnon de route, 'autrui me regarde, au point que je doive me considérer comme son 'otage', qu'il est une présence 'plus intime à moi que moi-même.'" Jean Greisch, "Ethique et ontologie," in, J. Greisch and J. Rolland, eds., *Emmanuel Levinas, l'éthique comme philosophie première*, actes du Colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle, 23 août–2 septembre, 1986 (Paris: Le Cerf, 1993), 28–29.
3. According to Martin Srajek, one cannot understand Levinas's thought without referring it to his own experience of persecution and exile: "Their biographies [Levinas and Derrida] are marked by the fact of their Jewishness and the fear, persecution, hatred, and exile which they had to confront because of that heritage. In reading their texts we have to remind ourselves continually of the perennial societal ostracism to which the two thinkers were exposed in order to understand the connections with the philosophy they write which centers around absence, the no-place ('non-lieu'), exile, etc." Martin Srajek, *In the Margins of Deconstruction* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1998), 16.
4. According to Pierre-Antoine Chardel, reading Levinas is itself an experience of exile in that it confronts the reader with the radical alterity of a style that is not easily understood and calls for an effort of deciphering and interpretation: "Autant dire que concevoir la naissance d'une relation éthique au coeur de l'écriture, c'est-à-dire comme l'expérience d'une attention particulière à Autrui, impose un certain effort herméneutique qui permet d'en libérer les richesses les plus inattendues. C'est un tel travail que Lévinas nous invite à accomplir. Loin d'être simplement comprise comme une aventure d'être, une simple expérience égologique ou ontologique, l'écriture se conçoit à travers un effort d'interprétation comme une véritable expériende d'être pour l'autre, d'extériorité absolue et d'absolu exil. Elle reflète la vie nomade." Pierre-Antoine Chardel, "Du primat du visage aux richesses inattendues de l'écriture, Remarques sur l'herméneutique d'Emmanuel Lévinas," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 100 (2002): 187.
5. The Levinas concordance (Cristian Ciocan and George Hansel, *Levinas Concordance* [Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2005]) accounts for sixty-seven explicit usages of the noun "exile", and forty-

six usages of the verb "to exile" in the totality of the Levinassian corpus (*Levinas Concordance,* 284–85). Other commentators have also mentioned the importance of other concepts belonging to the language game of exile, as does, for exemple, Jean-Luc Thayse, about the concept of "evasion." Cf. Jean-Luc Thayse, "Fécondité et évasion chez Lévinas," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 96 (1998): 624–59. Or, Fabio Ciaramelli's study of the concept of "exodus." "De l'évasion à l'exode. Subjectivity et existence chez le jeune Lévinas," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 80 (1982): 553–78; see also Raymond Duval, "Exode et altérité," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 59 (1975): 217–41.

6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 213; my italics. Cited inline as TI.
7. This is precisely John Drabinski's question: "The question of how to articulate transcendence outside the boundaries of the transcendental ego must first ask the question: How can alterity signify without the constitutional apparatus? How can appearance be thought without the structures of the subject to whom something appears?" John Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity* (Albany:SUNY Press, 2001), 100.
8. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (X: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 131.
9. Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 188. Cf. also Robert Bernasconi for whom the Levinassian description of an "absolute" alterity makes no sense in the phenomenological context where alterity necessarily depends on the constitutive activity of a consciousness: "But can one make sense of an alterity that is not relative? This is one of the most powerful questions that Derrida poses to Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics." He appeals to the full force of the Western tradition to say that the Other is other only as other than myself. The Other cannot be absolved of a relation to an ego from which it is other; it cannot be absolutely Other. Robert Bernasconi, "The Alterity of the Stranger and the Experience of the Alien," in Jeffrey Bloechl, ed., *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 63.
10. It is interesting to note how Levinas' concept of nudity as a symbol for exclusion from the world is similar to the Hebrew conception of nakedness as representing those people excluded from society, i.e., prisoners, slaves, prostitutes, madmen and the cursed; cf. Edgar Haulotte, *Symbolique du vêtement* (Paris: Aubier, 1966), 79.
11. The sensible as the context of the encounter with the face has also been observed by Alphonos Lingis: "There would then be two kinds of sensibility: A sensibility for the elements and the things of the world, a sensuality, which is appropriation and self-appropriation, and a sensibility for the face of another, which is expropriation and responsibility." Alphonso Lingis, "The Sensuality and the Sensitivity," in Richard Cohen, ed., *Face to Face with Levinas* (New York: SUNY Press, 1986), 227.
12. Emmanuel Levinas, "Language and Proximity," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 118.
13. Levinas is here very close to Heidegger's understanding of a pre-cognitive experience of the world, as observed by Ziarek: "Levinas makes it perfectly clear that the way he understands enjoyment is akin to the Heideggerian analysis of the modes of Being of Dasein. Enjoyment is the primary mode of the ego's relating to the world. In this relation, the ego constitutes itself as ego through the fulfillment of its needs. This mode of annulling the alterity of the world however, is pre-reflexive and pre-representational. As Levinas repeatedly remarks, enjoyment and sensibility nourish representation. Representation does thematize what nourishes it, yet the very moment of nourishing is lost in it. In this sense, enjoyment precedes representation, in a manner somewhat similar to that in which Dasein's *Existenzialen* precede reflexive thinking." Krzysztof Ziarek, "Semantics of Proximity: Language and the Other in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas," *Research in Phenomenology* 19 (1989): 234.
14. This proto-ethical function of sensibility has also been observed by Drabinski: "Though Levinas has articulated the structure of manifestation adequate (in its radical non-adequation) to the transcendence of alterity, a question still remains: How may the subject be in relation with transcendence, without the analysis falling back into the logic of positionality? This is a signification issue, for the positionality of the subject anchors the logic that underpins thematization, the logic that is the very point of departure for idealism. The relationality of affective life is the clue to this nonpositional mode of relation. Specifically, the relations of enjoyment and desire provide Levinas with descriptive occasions to articulate the modality of relation proper to transcendence" (Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 2001, 107).
15. Levinas, as Stephan Strasser observes, is very close here to the Sartrian analysis of the other as a "hole in the world": "Le 'visage', en revanche, dépouillé de ses qualités objectivables, 'le visage dans sa nudité', comme aime dire Lévinas, est une absence. Notre philosophe serait d'accord avec Sartre quand celui-ci compare l'alter ego à un 'trou dans le monde'. Le visage, en effet, n'a pas de place, n'a pas de fonction à

l'intérieur de l'horizon du monde; au contraire, il lui appartient de déranger l'ordre egocentrique de mon monde." Stephan Strasser, "Le concept de 'phénomène' chez Lévinas et son importance pour la philosophie religieuse," *Revue Philosophique du Louvain* 76 (1998): 338.

16. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 341–42.
17. Ibid., 343.
18. This is precisely Jean-Louis Chrétien's observation: "Cette faillite est, pour Lévinas, la subjectivité elle-même, qui n'est qu'en manquant, par trop-plein d'être, parce qu'avant la substitution éthique (l'un-pour-l'autre) il y a, sans que le fondement philosophique en soit clair, une substitution ontologique (l'un à la place de l'autre), où 'je repousse et éloigne le prochain par mon identité même, par mon occupation de l'aire de l'être, ce qui fait que 'j'ai donc toujours à rétablir la paix' (AE 175). Je brise la paix par le seul fait d'exister et d'être moi-même, j'occupe une aire dont il semble que par cette occupation même, je chasse l'autre et prends sa place comme si naître était tuer, comme si vivre était usurper." Jean-Louis Chrétien, "La dette et l'élection," in Catherine Chalier and Miguel Abensour, eds., *Emmanuel Lévinas, Cahier de l'Herne* (Paris: L'Herne, 1991), 267.
19. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 233.
20. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Being and Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 138.
21. This is precisely Michel Haar's objection to Levinas' understanding of the exile of subjectivity as having ethical implications: "Mais ne faut-il pas qu'il y ait un écart relatif, une médiation, un espacement, un détour, un *lieu* et un *milieu* 'entre' moi et l'autre, un 'séjour' pourqu'il y ait *ethos, éthique*? . . . Comment y aurait-il réponse de celui dont l'identité est infiniment arrachée à tout rassemblement en soi, infiniment exilée? Si le moi est 'malgré moi', transproprié, altéré sinon aliéné, 'possédé par l'autre', privé de centre autant que de périphérie, *d'où* peut-il répondre à l'autre et *où* le rejoindrait-il? Peut-il encore rencontrer l'autre et que peut-il lui apporter, s'il 'est'déjà l'autre, s'il a déjà subi la 'fission du noyau' de son psychisme." Michel Haar, "L'obsession de l'autre,"in *Emmanuel Levinas. Cahier de l'Herne*, 451.
22. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 117.
23. Cf. André Neher, *Notes sur Qoheleth* (Paris: Minuit, 1951), 171–91.
24. This contraction of itself in favor of the other is very similar to the kabbalistic concept of *Tsimtsoum* as Catherine Chalier notes: "Là où la cabale et R. Haïm évoquent la notion de *Tsimtsoum,* de contraction originaire du divin pour qu'une réalité autre que Dieu soit, là où le hassidisme interprète cette même notion en termes de voilement plutôt que retrait, Lévinas, sans s'y référer explicitement, parle d'effacement de Dieu qui livre à l'homme la responsabilité du monde. Or cette responsabilité ne s'entend qu'en apercevant la subjectivité 'dans le renoncement, dans l'effacement et dans une passivité totale' (ADV 154). Ce qui revient à dire, selon les termes de la mystique, dans le *Tsimtsoum* de l'homme. Comme s'il fallait que celui-ci réponde à celui de Dieu pour que s'éveille en chacun la conscience, jamais assez fine, de la signification d'un Dieu qui, au-delà de l'être, voue l'homme à l'autre homme avant de le dédier à l'être." Catherine Chalier, "L'âme de la vie," in *Emmanuel Lévinas, Cahier de l'Herne*, 397.
25. In this we oppose Rudolf Bernet, for whom the gift to the other presupposes the presence of the other in an already constituted common world; the other thus cannot be approached as exiled from my world, as he must necessarily belong to that world if a gift of that world to him is to be possible: "As to the *ontological side*, it must be stressed once more that the life I am giving away is and remains *my* life. It is not the life of a complete stranger, and it is not necessarily a gift addressed to a complete stranger. Turning all Others (including myself) into strangers is ontologically unacceptable and ethically unnecessary. I must have something in common with the life I am giving away, and I must have something in common with the Other to whom I offer the gift of my life." Rudolf Bernet, "The Encounter with the Stranger: Two Interpretations of the Vulnerability of the Skin," in *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God*, 61.

Elon University, Durham, NC 27705