"Nameless Singularity": Levinas on Individuation and Ethical Singularity

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ABSTRACT: Marion has criticized Levinas for failing to account for the individuation of the Other, thus leaving the face of the Other abstract, neutral and anonymous. I defend Levinas against this critique by distinguishing between the individuation of the subject through hypostasis and the singularization of self and Other in the ethical response. An analysis of the *instant* in Levinas's early and late work shows that it is possible to speak of a "nameless singularity" which does not collapse into neutrality or abstraction, but rather explains the sense in which *anyone* is responsible for *any* Other who happens to come along.

In a recent article entitled, "From the Other to the Individual," Jean-Luc Marion argues that Levinas's ethics of responsibility fails to give an adequate account of the Other's individuation as a particular person who is concretely distinguishable from anyone else who happens to face me. As long as Levinas maintains the impossibility of experiencing the Other's face as a phenomenon, and as long as he forbids identifying the Other as such, he would seem to condemn the Other to "appear[ing] as 'no person,' as no individual, as no so-and-so."[1] The task for readers of Levinas who wish to overcome the impersonality of the Other in his work would be to find "the Other in its proper name," to show how the Other is individuated in relation to me, just as I have been individuated in relation to him or her (OI 101). The key to such an individuation for Marion is love, whereby both lover and beloved are mutually exposed to one another, becoming utterly irreplaceable or unsubstitutable in one another's eyes.[2] By contrast, Levinas's ethics of responsibility, and especially his ethics of substitution, would seem to condemn the Other to an impersonal anonymity which is dangerously close to the impersonality of being that his philosophy explicitly seeks to overcome. Even worse perhaps, it would make use of the encounter with an Other in order

to explain the individuality of the self, while leaving the face of the Other itself in nameless abstraction. Marion concludes that, without an account of love such as his own, the self is "individualized by the call of the face, but this face itself remains that of no person. Solipsism is reestablished, simply displaced from knowledge to ethics" (OI 108).

Christine Gschwandtner has persuasively argued that Marion overlooks the sense in which, for Levinas, the Other is neither an identifiable individual nor an abstract universal, but rather an irreducibly singular Other who overflows his or her own phenomenal appearance, and breaks with every representational schema without thereby dissolving into nothing. To summarize Gschwandtner's complex argument in just a few words: Marion reads Levinas as if he were a Kantian—indeed, as if all ethics were fundamentally Kantian, basing itself on a universal moral law—and then he criticizes Levinas for being too universalist and therefore missing the individuality of the Other.[3] I wish to extend Gschwandtner's argument by showing not only that the Other is singular for Levinas, but also that this singularity must be distinguished from the individuality of a "person" who appears with perceptible attributes and bears this or that particular name. Marion is right in detecting a certain anonymity in the face of the Other, but he draws the false conclusion that this anonymity must therefore compromise the Other's singularity, and that we are doomed to fall back into solipsism unless we are able to "reach his or her face, and thus to identify it as such, to particularize and individualize it" (OI 108). In my view, there are few things more abusive to the singularity of the Other than this attempt to name, identify and individualize him or her in the name of "love." It may be impossible to speak or write about alterity without resorting to expressions such as "*the* Other" or "*the* face," which at first glance seem to miss the singularity of this or that Other, reducing him or her to a particular instance of alterity in general. But the inevitability of an impersonal, indifferent article such as "the" may not be just an unfortunate embarrassment for the ethics of alterity; as I will argue, it suggests an ethically significant anonymity at the heart of singularity, a productive trace of indifference in the midst of alterity. My analysis in this paper seeks to clarify the distinction between singularity and individuality through a reading of Levinas's early work on the hypostasis of the individual existent, and his later work in *Otherwise than Being* on the singularization of the responsible self through substitution for the Other. In both readings, I highlight the crucial role played by the *instant* as an interval or turning point which suspends the opposition between terms without canceling their differences, such that one may coherently speak of something like "nameless singularity." But first, I introduce the distinction between singularity and individuality in the context of Levinas's work as a whole.

Diane Perpich has recently argued that Levinas is not a philosopher of difference, but of singularity.[4] The Other to whom I respond does not bear alterity as an

attribute correlated to specific differences such as race, class, culture, or religious commitments.[5] Indeed, as Levinas says in an interview with Phillipe Némo, "The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his [or her] eyes!"[6] To grasp alterity in terms of concrete, observable differences would be to reduce an ethical concept to an ontological one, thus limiting my responsibility in advance to those who possess the appropriate qualities for commanding a response. For Levinas, I am not responsible for the widow, the orphan and the stranger as people of a certain kind or members of a certain social group; rather, I am responsible for the impoverished, abandoned and naked face of *anyone*, no matter who they are or what they have done. For this reason, I am no less responsible for the persecuted than for the persecutor, the murderer, the one who denies his or her own responsibility for Others.[7] It is not as a rich person that I am commanded to feed the poor, nor as a karate master that I am commanded to help someone fend off an attacker; and yet, in my concrete response to others I will undoubtedly draw on whatever particular talents or resources I can muster. It is not even as a solitary existent that I am commanded to responsibility, although in his early texts, and even in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas clearly believes that an independently individuated existent is required for an encounter with absolute alterity that resists including the Other as an aspect of itself.

Later in this paper, I will problematize this early view through a reading of *Otherwise than Being*, where the individuation and singularization of a responsible self are always already intertwined. In any case, singularity in the most specific sense of the word articulates an *ethical* relation for Levinas rather than a strictly ontological one. It refers not to an existent's unshared relation to existence in general, but rather to its (non-relating) relation to *another singular existent*. Ontological singularity, or individuation, involves the relation between a determinate "one" and an undifferentiated generality; it arises through the event of hypostasis whereby I become an existent by spontaneously limiting or contracting the impersonal generality of being as such. But ethical singularity, or singularity in the more precise sense for Levinas, involves a relation between existents who are irreducible to each other or to anything else; it arises through the ethical event of facing and/or substitution, whereby I become myself in being commanded to unique responsibility for you. In this second sense, singularity is not something that belongs to the single individual; it requires and sustains plurality, for no one can be faced or encountered alone.

Given the asymmetry of the ethical relation, we should not expect the singularity of the uniquely responsible self to be structured in the same way as the singularity of the face that commands. While the singularity of the self refers to its unique responsibility for an Other, the singularity of the Other refers to its *expression* of singularity in a face which breaks with its own image to express itself *kath'auto*, or on its own terms, as a unique, irreducible and unrepeatable Other.

It is not just a matter of the Other *existing* as a unique individual (in which case one might expect even an ashtray to be singular), but rather of *expressing* this unicity in the non-intentional saying of any said.[8] Levinas sometimes speaks of individuation and ethical singularization as two births, first the creation *ex nihilo* of a solitary individual, and then the second, "latent" birth of a responsible subject who arises not out of nothing, but rather in response to an Other.[9] One of the questions I will address later in this paper is whether we are entitled to think of these births in separation from one another, since the effort to do so in Levinas's early work tends to create more problems than it solves by construing individual being as a suffocating burden which is then lifted or "pardoned" by an Other.[10]

I wish to argue that the singularity of the Other, and the different but intertwining singularity of the responsible self, is not incompatible with a certain universality which entitles us to use a phrase like "the Other" without contradicting or diminishing the singularity of *this* Other who faces me here and now. This universality is precisely *not* a generality which effaces distinct singularities by subsuming them all indifferently under the same category, the most general of which would be "being."[11] Levinas's privileged way of discussing generality is through reference to the *il y a*, or "there is," which I will discuss at greater length in the following section. But not every form of universality involves generality, nor must every sense of universality be opposed or hostile to singularity. The double command to respond *ethically* to this singular Other, but also to respond *politically* by seeking justice for the Third, involves an intertwining of singularity and universality which is difficult to negotiate, but not impossible except in the sense that there is no definitive end to the negotiations. But even at the ethical level, Levinas's account of responsibility for the singular Other cannot avoid making a certain claim to universality in order to offer itself as an ethical imperative rather than as merely the description of a contingent encounter that may or may not happen, depending on the particular people involved.

This singular universality is not best formulated in general terms (i.e., "for all x, there is a y which commands it to responsibility"), because such a formulation would already reduce the self and Other to empty variables existing on the same ontological plane. Rather, I think the best way to express the universality of the singular Other's singularizing command is as follows: *Anyone* is responsible for *any Other*. Note here the crucial difference between "any" and "all," both of which may seem at first glance to articulate universality in more or less the same way.[12] If we said that *all* subjects were responsible for the Other (leaving aside for the moment the possibility of more than one Other), we would be implying that there is a *totality* of subjects, all of whom are responsible for the Other. This is clearly not how responsibility works for Levinas, since it would present responsibility as a universal, ontological aspect of subjectivity, thus effacing the sense in which *I* myself, as a singularly responsible subject, am commanded in this or that par-

ticular situation by a singular Other. To modify Dostoevsky's phrase only slightly: Everyone is responsible for everyone else, *but I am more responsible than all the Others*. The word "all" seems perfectly adequate for expressing the first part of this phrase, but utterly inadequate for expressing the second part, and also for understanding the relationship between universality and singularity in this seemingly paradoxical sentence. One could avoid this difficulty, however, by saying that *any* subject is responsible for any Other, because the word "any" expresses universality without implying a totality of subjects who are responsible, but also without leaving open the possibility that *some* subjects might avoid responsibility altogether. The word "any" refers to an infinity of possible subjects, each of whom would be responsible if faced by an Other; but it does not necessarily express this responsibility as an ontological property of the subject. To put this point somewhat differently, the word "any" expresses a certain universality, while still holding open a space for the singularity of *this* one to be responsible for *this* Other.

　　In short, Levinas's account of ethical singularity requires a logic of the "anyone," of the stranger who is nameless and singular, but not for that reason generic or indistinct. In what follows, I outline this logic through a reading of Levinas's early work—*Time and the Other* and *Existence and Existents*—alongside his mature position in *Otherwise than Being*, focusing on role that the concept of hypostasis plays in both. Hypostasis is important because it accomplishes the individuation of an existent, such that it may encounter an absolute Other without either fusion or dialectical opposition. But the structure of hypostasis also exposes the existent to the anonymous indeterminacy of the *il y a*, which dissolves all distinctions, including that between self and Other. What is the relation between the generality of the *il y a* against which individuation takes place, and the intertwining of universality and singularity in the "anyone" responsible for "any Other"? I argue that Levinas's references to the instant of individuation in his early work, and the instant of singularization in *Otherwise than Being*, provides the key to understanding the nameless singularity at the heart of ethical life.

1. Individuation and the Instant of Hypostasis: Levinas's Early Work

Levinas's main concern in his early books, *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*, is the show the individuation of a solitary existent against the anonymous generality of being. This solitude of the existent is not merely a particular quality or characteristic, but a basic ontological condition; to exist is to be one, alone, a monad with its own separate relation to existence as such. While the verbs of perception are transitive, such that I always see or touch *something*, Levinas claims that the verb "to be" is absolutely intransitive (TO 42). This intransitivity does not prevent the existence of an existent from doubling up with itself, such

that simply by being, I am *myself*.[13] Existing is in this sense "the interior relation-
ship par excellence" (TO 42), a relationship between the individual existent and
the anonymous generality of existence, the latter of which is not a distinct object
but rather an "impersonal 'field of forces'" against which personal existents arise
and struggle to maintain their distinction (TO 46, 48; see also EE 64). Levinas
emphasizes the anonymity of impersonal existence, which he calls the "*il y a*" or
"there is":

> *There is*, in general, without it mattering what there is, without our being able
> to fix a substantive to this term. *There is* is an impersonal form, like in it rains,
> or it is warm. Its anonymity is essential. . . . What we call the I is itself sub-
> merged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it. The disappearance
> of all things and of the I leaves what cannot disappear, the sheer fact of being
> in which *one* participates, without having taken the initiative, anonymously.
> Being remains, like a field of forces, like a heavy atmosphere belonging to no
> one." (EE 58; see also TO 46–7)

There is no privacy, no secrecy, no distinct personality, and no solitude in the
il y a.[14] As existents, we never encounter or experience this pure anonymity of
existing directly; we can only imagine it through the destructive return to an
indistinction prior to the emergence of separate existents, and not as something
distinct in itself.[15] There is no beginning or end to the *il y a*, only the monotonous
persistence of emptied existence, a "that it is" without any "this", an impossibility
of completing the sentence, "There is . . ." In these texts, the anonymity of the *il y
a* is clearly tied to its generality, which threatens to efface the distinction between
individual existents.

By contrast, to be a conscious existent—not only solitary and ontologically
individuated, but also reflexive and self-aware—is to be "to some extent a master
of being, already a name in the anonymity of the night" (EE 60; see also EE 98).
It is important for Levinas to establish the originary solitude and intransitivity
of existence, not as the ultimate accomplishment of an existent individualized in
Being-toward-death as in Heidegger's ontology, but rather as the initial starting-
point of an existent whose challenge is to transcend its existential solitude toward
an Other. Only an existent who stands on its own can encounter the Other without
assimilating it or being assimilated; and yet, standing on one's own is only the
beginning, and not the whole point of human existence. Later, this solitude of the
existent will be opened up: first by the mystery of death, which confronts me with
the impossibility of possibility, and then by the alterity of an Other who appears
first as the sexually different (the feminine Other), and finally as the son whom I
"am" even while remaining myself. But before this can happen, I must be posited
as an individual existent, already conscious and masterful, and therefore capable
of bearing a name.[16]

Levinas describes the positing or hypostasis of a subject as an "inversion at the heart of anonymous being" (TO 52; see also EE 18). This hypostasis happens in an instant; it makes "a rip in the infinite beginningless and endless fabric of existing. The present rips apart and joins together again; it begins; it is beginning itself" (TO 52). This beginning is not yet the act or decision of a subject, but rather the spontaneous emergence of a "this" from the "that", of a personal existent from the sheer impersonality of Being. In this sense, hypostasis does not refer to a thing but rather to an event, a turning point between general existing and the individual existent. The instant of hypostasis "is not one lump; it is articulated" (EE 18). And thanks to its hinge-like structure, this articulation of the instant does not prolong itself into a temporal duration of any sort. As Levinas explains in *Time and the Other*:

> On the one hand, it [hypostasis] is an event and not yet something; it does not exist; but it is an event of existing through which something comes to start out from itself. On the other hand, it is still a pure event that must be expressed by a verb; and nonetheless there is a sort of molting in this existing, already a something, already an existent. It is essential to grasp the present at the limit of existing and the existent, where, in function of existing, it already turns into an existent. (TO 52)

In its first aspect, the hypostasis is pure beginning, pure coming-to-be without anything "there" yet as an existent; but in its second aspect, an existent is already taking shape or "molting" in this emergent becoming: a being is coming-to-be. These two aspects of hypostasis are not separable; rather, they emphasize different sides of the same hinged process: *coming-to*-be and coming-*to-be*.

In its first aspect of *coming-to*-be, hypostasis gives rise to a freedom of beginning and becoming; but as soon as an existent comes-*to-be* (i.e., immediately, in that very instant), it begins to "[bear] existing as an attribute," as a property or possession over which it exerts a "jealous and unshared mastery" in ontological solitude (TO 52). This mastery runs up against its limits when faced by the mystery of death and the alterity of the Other; but without this existent who bears, owns and masters its existence from the start, existence itself "would remain fundamentally anonymous" (TO 52). The formal schema of the present outlined in hypostasis is such that the beginning cannot remain without beginning again and again; for as soon as an existent begins to be, it already begins to acquire this being as a possession which doubles up with its own existence. As Levinas puts it, "My being doubles with a having; I am encumbered by myself. And this is material existence" (TO 56). As soon as I come-to-be, I am: I exist, I am an existent. And as soon as I emerge as an existent, my existence is mine and mine alone; I have myself. But as soon as I *have* myself, I am already doubled up; I have something, even if this "something" is my own relation to general existence. The materiality of the hypostasized subject makes it possible for me to grasp myself

as a possession but also be burdened by myself, to be for myself and also beside myself, *moi* and *le moi*, myself and the ego.

Levinas accounts for the freedom of the existent in terms of its capacity to begin (the first aspect of hypostasis, *coming-to*-be); but he accounts for the ambivalent mastery and self-encumbrance of the existent in terms of its doubling up (its second aspect, coming-*to-be*). This doubling of the existent, even in its initial emergence, makes it possible for me to grasp my existence as *mine*, as a possession over which I have ownership and control—but only at the price of entrapment in a material body.[17] In Levinas's early work, the materiality of embodiment is tragic; it implies an encumbrance of the existent with itself as a necessary and unfortunate consequence of its own coming-to-be.[18] Here we have what could fairly be called a solipsistic self, trapped in its own individual relation to existence, burdened by the very conditions of its mastery. This entrapment raises the question of how an individual existent might escape the burden of solipsism through an encounter with the Other:

> How, in the alterity of a you, can I remain I, without being absorbed or losing myself in that you? How can the ego that I am remain myself in a you, without being nonetheless the ego that I am in my present—that is to say, an ego that inevitably returns to itself? How can the ego become other to itself?[19] (TO 91)

Levinas's response to these questions in *Time and the Other* is rather surprising: "This can happen only in one way: through paternity" (TO 91).[20] The father engenders a son who is both an Other and "in some way" also the same as the father (TO 91). The son is Other in the sense that he is another existent altogether, with his own solitary being, his own life to live. The birth of the son marks a new beginning, a separate hypostasis, a different individual relation to existence which is not reducible to that of the father. However similar father and son may be in certain respects—the same eyes, the same talent, the same way of walking—this similarity does not compromise their alterity, since alterity refers not to a difference with respect to this or that particular characteristic, but rather to an ethical-ontological cleavage whereby the Other withdraws or excepts itself from both a relation of similarity and a relation of difference. The Other's resistance to being reduced to her relation to me (or to anything else) is an expression of her singularity; but this singularity would be threatened by an immediate relation to the anonymous generality of existence as such, which swamps both identity and alterity with indistinction. The hypostasis of a solitary existent is important, not primarily for its own sake, but for the sake of the Other's alterity and singularity, so that he or she may escape from being absorbed either into either my own narrow identity or into the vast non-identity of the *il y a*.

The son presents an interesting example of alterity, however. For the son is not only Other to the father, but also intimately related to him. Levinas states this ambiguity in strange, even counter-intuitive language; I am not merely *like*

my child, "I *am in some way* my child" (TO 91, my emphasis),[21] and the child is "[a] myself who is nonetheless a stranger to me" (TO 91). This does not mean that the child is merely an "alter ego," or another version of myself (TO 91). As a separate existent, the son is his own person; he has his own hypostasis, his own individual relation to existing as such. Thanks to this separation, the son is not merely an extension, continuation, product or side effect of the father; and so the latter may be responsible for the son and even responsible for the son's own responsibilities, without compromising the difference between them. And yet, the son is not an absolute Other or stranger who comes from the outside to command me to responsibility. Rather, the separate existence of the son emerges from within the father's own familiar, private sphere, through his closest intimacy with what Levinas calls the "feminine Other."

Without a father and a mother, the son would never have emerged as a separate, solitary existent. (Nor would the daughter, though Levinas neglects to mention her at all.[22]) But this apparently banal fact has serious philosophical consequences for Levinas's argument; it suggests that there has never actually been a time when the individual existent, qua child, emerged *ex nihilo* without already responding to a singular(izing) Other. The parent is implicated in the very birth of the child— we could say *in his very hypostasis*, but only if we let go of the distinction made earlier between the hypostasis or "first birth" in which an individual is created *ex nihilo* and the second or "latent" birth that singularizes the self in response to an Other. Earlier in Levinas's account of hypostasis, it seemed that one could only become singular in the encounter with an absolute Other (second birth) if one were already individualized through hypostasis (first birth). Individuation and singularization were thus neatly separated, and seemed to happen chronologically. But with the birth of the son, the father is pardoned or released from the burden of his own separate hypostasis, at the same time that he participates in the new hypostasis of his child. How could the hypostasis of the son be a creation *ex nihilo* if the son is born *to a father*, and therefore already emerges as an existent in relation to another singular existent? Of course, this language of being born "to" someone works much better with maternity, and this is precisely the figure to which Levinas will refer in *Otherwise than Being*. But even in his early work, the relation between father and son suggests an intertwining of individuation and singularity, ontology and ethics, identity and alterity, that is only developed explicitly and at length in his late work on substitution.

It is important to note, however, that the individual existence of the father is opened up and singularized *not* in response to an absolute Other, but rather in response to an Other whom "I am in some way": an Other whose separate hypostasis opens up or "pardons" the terms of my own hypostasis, giving me hope that death is not the only way of escaping being (EE 89ff, TI 282–4). Individuation through hypostasis (the "first," ontological birth) and singularization through

the encounter with alterity (the "second" or latent, ethical birth) become twisted together here, since the child's birth is also my rebirth, and the hypostasis which ties him to his own existence is already a response to parents who welcome him, rather than a purely solitary struggle against the generality of being. The child is born into a home shared with Others who are both familiar and strange; he or she does not create this privacy alone out of nothing. The event of birth complicates the ontological solitude of the individual existent without breaching it altogether, thus opening up an asymmetrical transitivity of existence whereby "I *am in some way* my child" (TO 91) without the child ever becoming identical to myself. To *be* the Other without including him in my being is to "introduce a duality into existence, a duality that concerns the very existing of each subject. Existing itself becomes double" (TO 92).

The trace of sameness or indifference in the midst of alterity—which Levinas calls paternity or fecundity—does not reduce this duality of existing to a unity, but rather opens up the individual separateness of the hypostasized existent to a double ontology, an escape from the misfortunes of material self-encumbrance and entrapment in oneself. The co-incidence of alterity and indifference in the son trans-substantiates[23] the flesh of the self-encumbered existent, thus giving the tragedy of material existence an unexpected happy ending. However, it does so only by invoking a very specific relation (why paternity? why not parenthood? why not something else?) which presupposes an erotic encounter with the feminine Other who becomes, in this context, little more than a plot device: helpful for turning the story around, but not necessarily important for her own sake.[24] Does the story have to end this way? Might the materiality of the body signify otherwise than as a tragi-comic problem?

In his later work, Levinas moves away from the language of paternity, proposing a different solution to the question of how the self can become other without being annihilated as a self. In *Otherwise than Being*, he theorizes the subject as one who is always already the Other-in-the-same, anarchically affected by the alterity of the Other to the point of substituting for him or her. This substitution is not an exchange between two terms, as if person A replaced person B or vice versa, with no significant difference or asymmetry between them. Rather, Levinas argues that the self becomes *uniquely* itself, singular and irreplaceable, precisely by substituting for a singular and irreplaceable Other. Myself and the Other are not doubles, nor is the difference between us collapsed through substitution; rather, there is an intertwining of the Other-in-the-same which does not begin with myself but affects me from the side of the Other.[25] Substitution works through the interplay of singularity and indeterminacy, strangeness and proximity, alterity and indifference. In the next section of this paper, I will show how Levinas develops his own account of this interplay by rethinking the concept of hypostasis in relation to substitution and the instant of recurrence.

2. Singularity and the Instant of Hypostasis: Otherwise than Being

In *Otherwise than Being*, the ethical significance of material embodiment is figured not as a misfortune but as a chance, and not in terms of father-son relations but rather as a substitution which draws its inspiration from maternity without being identified with it. In his early work, Levinas largely overlooks the resources of the body for working through the problem of how the self relates to an Other without either assimilation or alienation. But in *Otherwise than Being*, materiality plays a vital role in the substitution which entwines the Other in the same right from the beginning—or, to speak more precisely, *before* the beginning, in the time before time of *an-arche*. While in Levinas's early work, the existent begins spontaneously in the schema of the present moment, in *Otherwise than Being*, the responsible subject finds itself "compelled before commencing" (OB 103). Substitution involves a passivity that is "irreversibly past . . . an irrecuperable time" prior to the present and unrepresentable within it (OB 104). This shift in strategies—separated by 26 years of intense philosophical work circling around the questions of alterity, identity and time—involves a substantial reworking of the concept of hypostasis, and of the ethical-ontological relation between alterity and indifference.

In what follows, I argue that Levinas weaves into his account of subjectivity in *Otherwise than Being* both the *alterity* of anarchic responsibility for the Other, and the *indifference* of a self who could be anyone at all, not a solitary individual trapped in its own relation to existence, but a nameless pronoun, merely "oneself," *soi-meme*. What is astonishing about this shift is that the very elements which characterized the *il y a* in *Time and the Other*—indeterminacy, anonymity, impersonality—return in *Otherwise than Being* to serve a radically different function, and to solve the problems first raised by an overly narrow focus on the starting-point of a radically separated, individuated self.[26] Furthermore, the materiality of the body, which in Levinas's early work appeared as both a burden and a temptation to virile self-possession, is reconfigured in *Otherwise than Being* as a gift which I have always already been commanded to offer. There is nothing about me in particular that inverts the materiality of my body into a gift; nor is there something universal about all human embodiment in general that makes this gift possible. Rather, it is the *co-incidence of alterity and indifference*, the Other-in-the-same, singularity and anonymity, that makes substitution possible. In this section, I will outline the logic of this coincidence in *Otherwise than Being*, focussing in particular on the role that hypostasis plays in Levinas's account of substitution.

In the chapter of *Otherwise than Being* entitled "Substitution," Levinas explains the materialization of a *singular* but *anonymous* self in terms of what he calls a recurrence. Recurrence does not refer to the reflexivity of a consciousness which doubles and diverges from itself in order to eventually return and reclaim itself

as a possession. Rather, it refers to a contraction of the self backed up in its own skin, concentrated to a mere point which is not a mediated self-identification, but an immediate *soi-même* ("oneself" or literally "self-same"). In contrast to the territorial expansion of self-consciousness, recurrence marks a retreat inward with no chance of escape or diversion, to the point where this "retreat" feels more like an exile or expulsion than a homecoming. The self in recurrence is "in itself already outside of itself," "expelled into itself outside of being," in "exile or refuge in itself" (OB 104, 105). Why am I chased into myself and out of being, in a way that both concentrates my selfhood into a single point and also explodes or fissures this point, giving me no identity to hold onto? Because before I am conscious of having committed myself to anyone—before I am even conscious of being a self—I am already responsible for the Other in a way that both interrupts my identity and also singles me out as a unique one: irreducibly myself because I am inescapably for the Other. As Levinas puts it, the self is "one and irreplaceable, one inasmuch as irreplaceable in responsibility" (OB 103). This unicity does not derive from something in me as a solitary existent, nor does it spontaneously arise through an inversion in the anonymity of existence, or *il y a*. Rather, it arises in response to an Other whom I can never quite grasp in terms of my own consciousness. There is nothing in my specific personality that makes me suitable for responding to this Other; rather, I respond as someone, *anyone*, not even as "I" but as "oneself," even as "non-quiddity, no one" (OB 106). I am singular and unique not *in spite* of this indeterminacy but *in the midst of it*, through the gesture of inverting the resources of my material existence from the possession of a doubled up consciousness into a gift for the Other. In this sense, the oneself is responsible even before it has a name of its own; it finds itself in the accusative prior to positing itself in the nominative.

Levinas elaborates this recurrence of the responsible self with reference to hypostasis, but with some important differences from his use of this term in *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*. Levinas's problem in his early work was to account for the emergence of selfhood in a way that did not subordinate the solitary, separate existent to Being in general, such that the self could encounter another human existent without the mediation of a third term already binding them together into a greater whole. In this early work, hypostasis refers to an ontological event in which the anonymity of sheer existence is inverted into a singular, material existent. As a hypostasized existent, the subject may encounter an Other; but Levinas makes no mention of an exposure to alterity right in the instant of hypostasis. In *Otherwise than Being*, however, hypostasis gets embroiled in "an anarchic plot," connected to the recurrence of an always-already responsible self (OB 105). Levinas writes: "The hypostasis is exposed as oneself in the accusative form, before appearing in the said proper to knowing as the bearer of a name" (OB 106). What is the significance of this exposure and

accusation, right at the level of hypostasis? Why is the self in recurrence a nameless "oneself" who "bears its name as a borrowed name, a pseudonym, a pro-noun" (OB 106)? And in what sense is this anonymous pronoun also a singular, unique, responsible self? Furthermore, if the hypostasis in *Time and the Other* articulated a turning point between anonymous existence and a personal existent, what sort of turning point is it articulating here? Are we dealing anything like the earlier concept of hypostasis, and if not, why would Levinas invoke this same concept in the different context of recurrence and substitution?

It seems to me that the link between earlier and later uses of hypostasis has to do with the formal structure of a turning point or hinge whose temporal articulation is the instant. While in *Time and the Other*, hypostasis articulated the hinge between *coming-to*-be and coming-*to-be*, in *Otherwise than Being* it articulates the hinge between contraction and fission, between the anguish[27] of being backed into one's skin and the expulsion or exile of oneself as homeless and wandering. "It is by this hypostasis that the person, as an identity unjustifiable by itself and in this sense empirical or contingent, emerges substantively" (OB 106). Through hypostasis, the responsible oneself becomes a body, materializes with a "materiality more material than all matter" (OB 108). In the instant of hypostasis, oneself is incarnated—not through a cumbersome doubling up which enables the reflexivity of consciousness and virile self-possession—but rather as a gift for the Other, "incarnated in order to offer itself" (OB 105). "This recurrence is incarnation. In it the body which makes giving possible makes one other without alienating" (OB 109).

This phrase provides one formulation of Levinas's late response to the question posed in his early work: "How can the ego become other to itself" without either alienating itself or waging war on the Other by grasping alterity as an opposition to itself (TO 91)? In *Otherwise than Being*, this problem is solved in part by a reformulation of the question beginning not with the ego but before it, before the adventures of consciousness, and even before the emergence of an ontologically separated individual. Rather than asking how the ego can be divested of its egoism, *Otherwise than Being* begins with the anarchic exposure of a singular but anonymous oneself who is not only *soi-meme* but already the *Other-in-the-same*.[28] In this later formulation, "The oneself is a singularity *prior to the distinction between the particular and the universal*. It is, if one likes, a relationship, but one where there is *no disjunction between the terms held in relationship*" (OB 108, my emphasis). How is it possible to articulate this singularity and non-disjunction in a philosophical language that is largely built on oppositions between universal and particular, same and other, one and many, conjunction and disjunction?

One of Levinas's strategies for thinking beyond philosophy while remaining within it is to draw on an exceptional moment in the history of philosophy, such as Plato's idea of the Good beyond Being, or Descartes's idea of infinity.[29] Similarly, in

the section on recurrence and hypostasis in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas refers to Plato's *Parmenides* to explicate the logic of a turning point or hinge which is key for understanding the Other-in-the-same. Levinas writes:

> The negativity of the in-itself [*en soi*], without the openness of nothingness, penetrating into the plenum—*en soi* in the sense of *an sich* and *in sich*—lies behind the distinction between rest and movement, between the being at home with oneself and wandering [*errance*], between equality and difference— reminds us of the formulas of the *Parmenides* concerning the instant in which the One "finding itself in motion . . . comes to a stand, or being at rest, . . . changes its state to being in motion," and in which it "must absolutely not be at any time" (156c). (OB 108–9; translation modified)[30]

The moment between rest and motion brings both opposites into contact without either subordinating one to the other or blurring the difference between them; but the hinge itself is neither at rest nor in motion. It is both, and at the same time it is neither, which is to say that the hinge itself "must not be at any time." Plato calls this turning point an "instant"; it marks an exception to time within time, a point which interrupts the flow of time without becoming strictly atemporal.[31] Rather, in the instant, an interval is opened up between one way of being and its opposite; and this indifferent interval is what makes the transition between opposite states thinkable.[32]

    Like hypostasis, this interval is not a being but a turning point, which both "is not" and in a certain sense "is," again without either collapsing the difference between being and non-being, nor subordinating one to the other, nor setting in motion a dialectic. Levinas refers to this interval as a "No grounds *(Non-lieu)*, meanwhile or contra-tempo time (or bad times (*mal-heur*)), it is on the hither side of being and of the nothingness which is thematizable like being" (OB 108–9). Importantly, this is not just an abstract formal structure for Levinas; the no-place and no-time of the turning point is inscribed right in the pulsation of ethical-material embodiment as the synapse between heartbeats, the breathturn between inhalation and exhalation. The recurrence of a self who is for the Other before being for-itself, accused before it is named, happens in "the dead time or the *meanwhile* which separates inspiration and expiration, the diastole and systole of the heart beating dully against the walls of one's skin" (OB 109). As the interval between oneself and the Other, this turning point or "dead time"[33] refers neither to identity nor to alterity, but to their point of indeterminate contact, a point which takes up no space and no time, and which exceeds or bypasses representation.

    The logic of the interval brings together both sides of an opposition without blurring the distinction between them, without settling on either side, and without setting opposites into a dialectical motion that would eventually resolve itself. This logic allows Levinas to explain how the other can be "in" the same without being either identified with it or opposed to it. In a remarkable passage, he writes:

"Impassively undergoing the weight of the other, thereby called to uniqueness, subjectivity no longer belongs to the order where the alternative of activity and passivity retains its meaning. We have to speak here of expiation as *uniting identity and alterity*" (OB 118, my emphasis). I read this word "uniting" not as an integration which would collapse the distinction between terms, but rather as an intertwining that brings opposites into contact without either contradiction or fusion, in a relationship "where there is no disjunction between the terms held in relationship" (108). The "singular torsion *or* contraction of the oneself" (OB 104, my emphasis) is a precise formulation of this twisting-together of identity and alterity which forms a point from which "one must speak in the first person" (OB 82) without thereby being reduced to a solitary individual.[34]

The logic of the interval also helps to explain how the oneself in recurrence can be both unique and anonymous, or as Levinas puts it, a "nameless singularity" (OB 106). While at first glance a name seems to indicate the singularity, or at least the particularity, of a person, Levinas wants to avoid precisely this sliding indistinction between particularity and singularity. My name is not unique to me; I am one of many who share this name, or belong to the group of people named Lisa. But it is not as a Lisa that I am called to responsibility; it is as myself, pro-noun or pre-name [*prénom*], anonymous in the midst of my singularity, or perhaps even at the root of my singularity. Roland Barthes, among others, has noted the slipperiness of the pronoun, "I," which refers to everyone and no one.[35] This leads Barthes to conclude that the generic anonymity of language speaks through me whenever "I" speak, that the agency of the author dissolves along with its uniqueness. But the anonymity of the oneself is different from the anonymity of pronouns in structuralist accounts of language. For Levinas, the oneself may indeed appear as a faceless neutrality, "on the edge of the generality characteristic of all said," but this appearance is already a mask covering its "nameless singularity" (OB 106), its recurrence as a point of identity bearing alterity. This nameless singularity is irreducible to being, but it also inscribes itself as a trace in the midst of being; it borrows a name from being in order to show itself in the said, in order to matter in the world, and not just in the pure elsewhere of pre-originality—wherever and whatever that may be. However, this name of being is only a mask which is constantly unmasked, or unsaid, in its singular exposure to the Other. To repeat the formulation with which I began this paper: *Anyone* is responsible for *any Other* who happens to come along. The indeterminacy of the interval in the instant of hypostasis provides a logic for articulating selfhood as the Other-*in*-the-same, both separate and responsible, different and exactly equivalent to Others; it allows us to describe how the self remains itself (or, more exactly, becomes itself) while substituting for the irreplaceable, non-exchangeable Other.

This figure of substitution offers a more satisfying response to the problem Levinas raised in *Time and the Other*, and which he solved at the time through the

relation of paternity: "How, in the alterity of a you, can I remain I, without being absorbed or losing myself in that you? . . . How can the ego become other to itself?" (TO 91). The central problem in *Otherwise than Being* is not how the ego can be altered while remaining itself, but rather how best to articulate the sense in which the self has always already been altered, such that this alteration even constitutes its selfhood. From this perspective, the individuation of a solitary existent would already be a secondary phenomenon, a reduction of the Other-in-the-same to consciousness turning and returning on its own pivot.[36] We could think of the hypostasis of oneself in *Otherwise than Being* as the way the Other-in-the-same emerges as a material, embodied existent without being thereby comprehended in existence, how it inscribes itself ontologically without being reconciled with ontology. The key to this inscription is an anonymous singularity which passes through both ontology and ethics without being proper to either. While in his early work, hypostasis describes the inversion of anonymous, indeterminate existence into a determinate, personal existent, in *Otherwise than Being* this concept describes a rather different "inversion in the process of essence, a withdrawing from the game that being plays in consciousness" (OB 107). Hypostasis inverts consciousness into the nameless but unique oneself, disrupting the games of departure/return, alienation/identification, loss/appropriation, even while inscribing itself as a trace that passes through these games, sobering them up. The indetermination of the oneself is not the same as the sheer indeterminacy of the *il y a*; rather, it refers to the ambiguity of an instant or hinge which brings opposites into contact and suspends their opposition without cancelling out their differences.

As long as we fail to distinguish between individuation and singularization, but also to articulate the intertwining of these relations in the interval of the instant, we may very well agree with Marion that Levinas's reference to *the* face of *the* Other already misses the singularity of this or that Other, thus reducing him or her to a particular instance of alterity in general. But in a more profound sense, it does not matter who this Other *is*; what matters is *that* s/he faces me, and that *a* face, any face, commands me. I have sought to demonstrate that the inevitability of an impersonal, indifferent article such as "the" or "a" is not a genuine problem for the ethics of alterity, and furthermore that it opens the possibility of addressing the ethical significance of nameless singularity, of the Other-in-the-same, and of a certain indifference in the midst of alterity. This is not to say that particular differences among oneself, the Other, and the third party are not important for the concrete practices involved in ethical life; indeed they are important, and we must consider these concrete differences in deciding what to do in any given situation. But Levinas's ethics of alterity does not claim to provide us with a framework for considering these differences, and perhaps it does not need to do so. Rather, Levinas's most significant contribution to ethical philosophy is to show the very genesis of responsibility in the command, issued

to any one of us, to respond to any Other who happens to come along. While this may not be the end of the conversation, there is no reason to suspect that Levinas thought it should be.

Notes

1. Jean-Luc Marion, "From the Other to the Individual," in *Levinas Studies: An Annual Review*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl and Jeffrey L Kosky (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2005), 108. Hereafter abbreviated OI.

2. Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 100. See also Christina Geschwandtner, "Ethics, Eros or Caritas? Levinas and Marion on Individuation of the Other," *Philosophy Today* 49 no. 11 (2005), 72.

3. For example, Marion writes, "The face can be as neuter as being, since it exercises moral law; yet the law does not take persons into account, and thus requires the neutralization of the particularities of the individualized face of the Other" (OI 110). Marion clearly overlooks the distinction between a universal "moral law" that would apply equally to every subject, and a command issued by the face of the Other, the latter of which singularizes the self as one who is uniquely responsible.

4. Diane Perpich, *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 50–77.

5. I leave sexual difference out of this list because, in *Time and the Other*, Levinas does identify the feminine, or the "other" sex, as the first manifestation of alterity, while in *Totality and Infinity*, he presents the feminine Other as a less radical, non-absolute form of alterity. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other* [hereafter TO], trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 85ff; and Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* [hereafter TI], trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 150–8 and 257–66. I will not address the complicated issues surrounding feminine alterity in the present paper; for a detailed discussion, see for example Tina Chanter, *Time, Death and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Phillipe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne UP, 1985), 85. Hereafter abbreviated EI. The full quotation reads as follows: "I wonder if one can speak of a look turned toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social [i.e., ethically based rather than ontologically or epistemologically based] relationship with the Other" (EI 85). The distinction between alterity and specific differences also seems to motivate Levinas's otherwise disastrous comments about the Israeli massacre of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila (see "Ethics and Politics" in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand, trans. Seán Hand and Michael Temple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 294). One can hold to the view that one is not responsible for Palestinian Others specifically as members of

a group called "Palestinian" without thereby abdicating responsibility to them *as Others*; but Levinas's statement does not make it clear that he has followed through with his own logic in this particular case.

7. Given the command to seek justice for the Third as well as bearing responsibility for the Other who faces me, my response to a murderous Other will usually entail something very different from my response to his or her potential victim. It may involve choosing to limit the freedom of one person in order to preserve the life of another, but this does not mean that I can make such a choice in good conscience, knowing that I am justified by an irrefutable moral or political principle. Nor does it mean that I am absolved from the responsibility to make difficult decisions that involve the comparison of incomparables, and so betray the unique singularity of each face. As paradoxical as this might sound, my infinite responsibility for the face of the Other is just the beginning; in my concrete ethical and political life, I must also be constantly deciding how to make good on my responsibilities, and since I am a finite being with limited resources in a world where not everyone is striving to be good, this process will inevitably involve compromises, calculations, and (hopefully limited) betrayals.

8. On the saying and the said, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond essence* [hereafter OB], trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 5–7. In short, the said refers to the form and content of propositions, while the saying refers to the vocative dimension of language, the sense in which whatever is said is also *addressed to* someone.

9. In *Existents and Existence*, Levinas describes hypostasis as "an incomparable event, prior to the participation in existence, an event of birth" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents* [hereafter EE], trans Alphonso Lingis (Dortrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic, 1988), 22). For further references to birth in EE, see 18, 23, 25, 29, 76–7, 79, 84, 92. On the birth of the subject *ex nihilo*, see TI 63, 104–5.

10. See the conclusion to section 2, where I address complications involving hypostasis and the birth of the son.

11. Of course, Heidegger and many others would insist that Being is not merely a general category, and to treat it as such is to reduce Being to a being; but I bracket these arguments for the sake of following a different thread.

12. For an explanation of the distinction between "any" and "all" in a completely different context, see Bertrand Russell, "Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types," in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Marsh (New York: George Allen and Unwin, 1956).

13. As Levinas puts it in *Existence and Existents*, "[T]he verb *to be* is a reflexive verb: it is not just that one is, one is oneself [*on s'est*]" (EE 28).

14. It takes a singular self to respond to the suffering of a singular Other. Levinas explains: "There are cruelties which are terrible because they proceed from the necessity of the reasonable order. There are, if you like, the tears that a civil servant cannot see: the tears of the Other. . . . As I see it, subjective protest is not received favourably on the pretext that its egoism is sacred but because the I alone can perceive the "secret tears" of the Other, which are caused by the functioning—albeit reasonable—of the hierarchy." Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height" in *Emmanuel Levinas:*

Basic Philosophical Writings, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1996), 23.

15. The *il y a* is only accessible through an imagined destruction because "existing is affirmed in its own annihilation" (TO 48). Even if I negate or deny the existence of what is, I cannot absolutely erase or evacuate existence altogether; negation does not render pure nothingness, but only the absence of what once was. I can negate existents, but I cannot undo existence altogether; I can kill a living being, but I cannot kill life itself, nor gain access to the meaning of "life itself" through my destructive act.

16. Particularly in *Existence and Existents*, the capacity to bear a name is an important aspect of the existent's individuation. The il y a is "impersonal existence, which, strictly speaking, we cannot give a name to" (EE 82). Hypostasis, by contrast, is the event whereby "the unnameable verb to be turns into substantives" (EE 83). Out of anonymous being, hypostasis gives rise to "beings capable of bearing names" (EE 98). "[T]he present brings about the exceptional situation where we can give to an instant a name, and conceive it as a substantive. Not by an abuse of language, but in virtue of an ontological transmutation, an essential equivocation" (EE 73).

17. "The freedom of the Ego and its materiality thus go together. The first freedom, resultant from the fact that in anonymous existing an existent arises [first aspect of hypostasis], includes as its price the very finality of the I riveted to itself [second aspect]. This finality of the existent, which constitutes the tragedy of solitude, is materiality. Solitude is not tragic because it is the privation of the other, but because it is shut up within the captivity of its identity, because it is matter" (TO 57; see also EE 27–8).

18. "Matter is the misfortune [*malheur*] of hypostasis" (TO 58).

19. Levinas formulates this question in various ways throughout the book: "How can a being enter into relation with the other without allowing its very self to be crushed by the other?" (TO 77). "What, then, is this personal relationship other than the subject's power over the world, meanwhile protecting its personality? How can the subject be given a definition that somehow lies in its passivity? Is there another mastery in the human other than the virility of grasping the possible, *the power to be able*?" (TO 81–2).

20. Note that, in *Existence and Existents*, paternity is mentioned but not developed (EE 96). This suggests that the "pardon" which renews my existence and gives me hope (EE 89ff) need not be understood solely in terms of father-son relations.

21. Later, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas will complicate this identity by adding an important asymmetry: "the son is not me; and yet I *am* my son" (TI 277).

22. In *The Gift of the Other*, I do locate a place in *Totality and Infinity* where the figure of a daughter interrupts Levinas's discourse on fathers and sons, but it takes quite a bit of interpretive work to find (or make) this place. See Lisa Guenther, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), 75–94.

23. This is an anachronistic term, since it appears not in *Time and the Other*, but rather in *Totality and Infinity* (TI 266). But I use it here nonetheless because I think it explains why the son is brought in as the final link in a chain from the burden of materiality, through labor, death and eros, towards fecundity.

24. See Irigaray's criticisms in "The Fecundity of the Caress: A Reading of Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* section IV, B, 'The Phenomenology of Eros'" in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986), 231–56. See also my treatment of this problem in *The Gift of the Other*, 49–74. Admittedly, these analysis pertain more to *Totality and Infinity* than to *Time and the Other*, where the absolute alterity of the feminine Other is emphasized. But I believe the substance of Irigaray's critique still pertains to *Time and the Other*. Why is the erotic encounter with the feminine Other not enough to open and transform the materiality of the existent? Why must a son be produced in order for this magic to work?

25. Not incidentally, this intertwining is figured in *Otherwise than Being* as maternity, not paternity. I have analyzed this difference in *The Gift of the Other*, Chapters 4 and 5.

26. Dennis King Keenan argues for the impossibility of rigorously separating the immanence of the *il y a* from the transcendence of God and the Other; see *Death and Responsibility: The "Work" of Levinas* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 15–31. See also Thomas Carl Wall's argument in Chapters 1 and 2 of *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999). These approaches have significantly influenced my own in this paper.

27. Levinas refers to "the irremissibility and, in the etymological sense of the term, the anguish of this in-itself of the Oneself" (OB 108). Anguish would not refer to a psychological state, but rather to a sense of tightness, narrowness, squeezing. This choice of vocabulary suggests a reference to birth, to the contraction of the maternal body and the emergence of a new existent.

28. The singularity of the oneself in recurrence is a "presynthetic, pre-logical and in a certain sense atomic, that is, in-dividual, unity of the self, which prevents it from splitting, separating from itself so as to contemplate or express itself, and thus show itself, if only under a comic mask, to name itself otherwise than by a pro-noun" (OB 107). And yet this punctual unity of the oneself is also a fission and explosion, "exposed outside by breathing, by divesting its ultimate substance even to the mucous membrane of the lungs, continually splitting up" (OB 107). This restlessness disrupts the apparent stasis of a single point, but without giving rise to the circulation of a consciousness that departs from itself in order to return to itself; it suggests a non-coincidence without the distance necessary for reflection and self-possession.

29. For Levinas's references to Plato, see for example TI 103, 218; for his references to Descartes, see TI 49–50, 197.

30. The original text reads: "La négativité de l'*en soi*, sans l'ouverture du néant, pénétrant le plein—*en soi* au sense de *an sich* et *in sich*—derrière la distinction du repos et du mouvement, du *chez soi* et de l'errance, de l'égalité et de la différence—nous rapelle les formulas du Parménide relatives à l'instant où l'Un <<se trouvant en movement . . . se met au repos et lorsque, étant en repos, pour le mouvement, il change son état>> et où il faut qu'<<il ne soit absolument en aucun temps>> (156c)." Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'etre ou au-dela de l'essence* (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 138.

31. Plato, *Parmenides* 156d3 in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1961), 920–956.

32. Levinas makes reference to this non-dialectical co-incidence of opposites in the instant as early as *Existence and Existents*: "[T]hat which begins must bring about the event of beginning in an instant, at a point after which the principle of non-contradiction (*A* is not, in the same instant, *non-A*) will hold, but for whose constitution it does not yet hold" (EE 76).

33. Note that in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas calls the interval between father and son a "dead time" (TI 284). See Keenan's analysis of dead time in *Death and Responsibility*, 16, 21.

34. Throughout *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas uses the word "or" in a singular fashion to articulate relations which are neither disjunctive nor conjunctive, but remain in the no-place and no-time of the instant. Sometimes the word "or" seems to indicate an alternative, sometimes a synonym or replacement for the same term, and sometimes it is difficult to decide between these two possibilities. For example: Levinas refers to "exile or refuge" (OB 105, 104), "explosion or fission" (104), "torsion or contraction" (104), "birth or creation" (105), "nature or creation" (105), "knot [noue] or denouement" (77), "witness or martyrdom" (77–8), "oneself, or the other in the same" (116), "ego or I" (102), "The *who* or the *me*" (103), and so forth. An entire paper could be devoted to following the subtleties of this word "or" in *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*.

35. See Roland Barthes: "Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a 'subject,' not a 'person,' and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it." Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001), 1467.

36. "The "fulcrum" in which this turning of being back upon itself which we call knowing or mind is produced thus designates the singularity par excellence" (OB 106). Even though recurrence is irreducible to consciousness and even contrasted with it, it is nevertheless also inscribed within consciousness as the turning point between me and myself, as the rupture which is both an exception to the order of consciousness (a trace of the other in the same) and also that which makes consciousness possible insofar as one can exploit this rupture, overlook its ethical significance, and use it as a pivot upon which to revolve around itself. But precisely for this reason, recurrence is "earlier" than consciousness, anarchic: "Ipseity is not an abstract point, the center of a rotation, identifiable on the basis of the trajectory traced by this movement of consciousness, but a point already identified from the outside . . . already older than the time of consciousness" (OB 107).